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# **HE WAS ANOINTED BECAUSE HE WAS INCARNATED:**

Cyrillo-Alexandrian Orthodoxy in the View of  
Modern Ethiopian Theologians

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Languages and  
cultures of Africa

2012

Department of Languages and Cultures of Africa  
School of Oriental and African Studies  
University of London

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***He was Anointed because He was incarnated:***

***Cyrillo-Alexandrian Orthodoxy in the view of modern Ethiopian  
Theologians***

**An Abstract**

That Christianity came to Ethiopia in the fourth Century at the time of King Ezana was fairly established by reliable historical accounts and archaeological findings. The arrival of Christianity also marked the introduction of Cyrillo-Alexandrian Christology. Athanasius the Great ordained the first bishop of Axum but it was his distant successor Cyril that had the final say on Ethiopian Christology through the translation of his polemical works against Nestorius of Constantinople into Ge'ez by the Nine Saints. Their work was seminal in firmly establishing Cyrillo-Alexandrian Christology in Ethiopia. In the view modern Ethiopian theologians, the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a challenge to Cyrillo-Alexandrian tradition by promoting a Chalcedonian alternative. The strategic mistakes committed by the Jesuits aside, the main reason for Ethiopian theologians rejection of Roman Catholicism was its perceived incompatibility with Cyrillian Christology. It was the same commitment to and the quest for Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy on the part of modern Ethiopian theologians that led to bloody christological disputes that lasted for over three hundred years and the formation of schools of thoughts (cultures) after the expulsion of the Jesuits. The driving force for the development of Ethiopian Christology was loyalty to the Cyrillo-Alexandrian tradition rather than theological innovations triggered by the need to address the challenges of the society. One of the schools of thought, *Karra Haymanot*, was declared authentic representative of the Cyrillo-Alexandrian tradition at the Council of Borumeda in 1878 to the dismay and persecutions of the other groups; namely, *Qibat* and *S'ägga*. It was, however, the contention of this thesis that the underlying factor behind the decisions of Borumeda was political considerations rather than theological reflections and we propose that all the three traditions sufficiently meet the requirements Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	i
KEY TO TRANSCRIPTIONS	v
1. INTRODUCTION: EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION	8
2. CHAPTER 1 ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY ARRIVED: EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION	18
1.1. The Coming of Christianity to Ethiopia	18
1.1.1. The Ethiopian Eunuch	18
1.1.2. Frumentius and Aedesius	20
1.1.3. The Nine Saints	25
1.2. The Life and Works of Cyril of Alexandria	29
1.2.1. Early Years	29
1.2.2. Career	31
1.2.3. The Christological controversy	40
2. CHAPTER 2 ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY CHALLENGED: THE INDIGENOUS AND THE FOREIGN	65
2.1. The People and the Troops	65
2.2. The Priests and the Missionaries	68
2.2.1. The First Theological Debate	75
2.2.2. The Theological Debate during the Reign of Zä-Dīngīl	90
2.2.3. Debates during the Reign of Susnīyos	92
2.2.4. The Theological Debate during the Reign of Fasilädäs	95
3. CHAPTER 3 ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY DISPUTED: THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGICALS SCHOOLS IN ETHIOPIA	101
3.1. <i>Qibat</i>	107
3.2. <i>S'ägga</i>	121
3.3. <i>Karra</i>	134
4. CHAPTER 4 ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY PRESECRIBED: THE COUNCIL OF BORUMEDA AND THE IMPERIAL EDICT	146
4.1. The Occasion of the Council of Borumeda	146
4.2. The Theology of the Council of Borumeda	157
5. CONCLUSION	176
BIBLIOGRAPHY	188

# KEY TO TRANSCRIPTIONS

1 <sup>st</sup> order	2 <sup>nd</sup> order	3 <sup>rd</sup> orders	4 <sup>th</sup> order	5 <sup>th</sup> order	6 <sup>th</sup> order	7 <sup>th</sup> order	‘wa’ letters
ha ʋ	hu ʋ	hi ʋ	ha ʋ	he ʋ	h(i) ʋ	ho ʋ	
lä ʌ	lu ʌ	li ʌ	la ʌ	le ʌ	l(i) ʌ	lo ʌ	lwa ʌ
ha ɬ	hu ɬ	hi ɬ	ha ɬ	he ɬ	h(i) ɬ	ho ɬ	
mä ɹ	mu ɹ	mi ɹ	ma ɹ	me ɹ	m(i) ɹ	mo ɹ	mwa ɹ
sä ɯ	su ɯ	si ɯ	sa ɯ	se ɯ	s(i) ɯ	so ɯ	
rä ɹ	ru ɹ	ri ɹ	ra ɹ	re ɹ	r(i) ɹ	ro ɹ	rwa ɹ
sä ʀ	su ʀ	si ʀ	sa ʀ	se ʀ	s(i) ʀ	so ʀ	swa ʀ
šä ʃ	šu ʃ	ši ʃ	ša ʃ	še ʃ	š(i) ʃ	šo ʃ	šwa ʃ
qä ɸ	qu ɸ	qi ɸ	qa ɸ	qe ɸ	q(i) ɸ	qo ɸ	qwa ɸ
bä ɸ	bu ɸ	bi ɸ	ba ɸ	be ɸ	b(i) ɸ	bo ɸ	bwa ɸ
tä ɸ	tu ɸ	ti ɸ	ta ɸ	te ɸ	t(i) ɸ	to ɸ	twa ɸ
čä ɸ	ču ɸ	či ɸ	ča ɸ	če ɸ	č(i) ɸ	čo ɸ	čwa ɸ
ha ɣ	hu ɣ	hi ɣ	ha ɣ	he ɣ	h(i) ɣ	ho ɣ	hwa ɣ
nä ɣ	nu ɣ	ni ɣ	na ɣ	ne ɣ	n(i) ɣ	no ɣ	nwa ɣ
ňä ɣ	ňu ɣ	ňi ɣ	ňa ɣ	ňe ɣ	ň(i) ɣ	ňo ɣ	ňwa ɣ
a ɣ	u ɣ	i ɣ	a ɣ	e ɣ	ï ɣ	o ɣ	
kä ɣ	ku ɣ	ki ɣ	ka ɣ	ke ɣ	k(i) ɣ	ko ɣ	kwa ɣ
hă ɣ	hu ɣ	hi ɣ	ha ɣ	he ɣ	h(i) ɣ	ho ɣ	
wă ɣ	wu ɣ	wi ɣ	wa ɣ	we ɣ	w(i) ɣ	wo ɣ	
a ɣ	u ɣ	i ɣ	a ɣ	e ɣ	ï ɣ	o ɣ	
zä ɣ	zu ɣ	zi ɣ	za ɣ	ze ɣ	z(i) ɣ	zo ɣ	zwa ɣ
žä ɣ	žu ɣ	ži ɣ	ža ɣ	že ɣ	ž(i) ɣ	žo ɣ	žwa ɣ
yă ɣ	yu ɣ	yi ɣ	ya ɣ	ye ɣ	y(i) ɣ	yo ɣ	
dă ɣ	du ɣ	di ɣ	da ɣ	de ɣ	d(i) ɣ	do ɣ	dwa ɣ
jă ɣ	ju ɣ	ji ɣ	ja ɣ	je ɣ	j(i) ɣ	jo ɣ	jwa ɣ
gă ɣ	gu ɣ	gi ɣ	ga ɣ	ge ɣ	g(i) ɣ	go ɣ	gwa ɣ
t’ă ɣ	t’u ɣ	t’i ɣ	t’a ɣ	t’e ɣ	t’(i) ɣ	t’o ɣ	t’wa ɣ
č’ă ɣ	č’u ɣ	č’i ɣ	č’a ɣ	č’e ɣ	č’(i) ɣ	č’o ɣ	č’wa ɣ
p’ă ɣ	p’u ɣ	p’i ɣ	p’a ɣ	p’e ɣ	p’(i) ɣ	p’o ɣ	
s’ă ɣ	s’u ɣ	s’i ɣ	s’a ɣ	s’e ɣ	s’(i) ɣ	s’o ɣ	s’wa ɣ
s’ă ɣ	s’u ɣ	s’i ɣ	s’a ɣ	s’e ɣ	s’(i) ɣ	s’o ɣ	
fă ɣ	fu ɣ	fi ɣ	fa ɣ	fe ɣ	f(i) ɣ	fo ɣ	fwa ɣ
pă ɣ	pu ɣ	pi ɣ	pa ɣ	pe ɣ	p(i) ɣ	po ɣ	
vă ɣ	vu ɣ	vi ɣ	va ɣ	ve ɣ	v(i) ɣ	vo ɣ	

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## **He was anointed because He was Incarnated**

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If we could visit heaven,  
Even for a day,  
Maybe for a moment,  
The pain would go away.

I'd put my arms around you,  
And whisper words so true,  
That living life without you,  
Is the hardest thing to do.

No matter how we spend our days,  
No matter what we do,

**He was anointed because He was Incarnated**

No morning dawns or evening falls,  
When we don't think of you.

Finally, I give all the credit, far more than I could allot to any person or institution, along with my adorations, to the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who is the *raison d'être* for this thesis, indeed, for anything and everything. Romans 11:36 said it all:

ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα· αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

**እስመ ነጥሉ እመኔሁ ወክሉ በእንቲአሁ ወክሉ ቦቱ ወሎቱ ስብሐት ለዓለመ ዓለም። አሜን።**

“For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen”

**ሁሉ ከእርሱና በእርሱ ለእርሱም ነውና፤ ለእርሱ ለዘላለም ክብር ይሁን፤ አሜን።**

## INTRODUCTION

The Ethiopian and Alexandrian Orthodox Churches began their relationship when St. Athanasius of Alexandria (r. AD 328-373) was approached by Frumentius, who as a young man from Tyre happened to be extremely lucky to be alive, to climb up the ladders of power to become a regent of the Axumite Empire and to be instrumental in establishing the Christian Church in Ethiopia after being taken captive with his younger brother Aedesius by Ethiopian pirates who hideously murdered his family whilst on a trip to India. When his time in Ethiopia was up, Frumentius sought to connect Ethiopian Christians with the well-established Markan See (Alexandria) to ensure continuity. To this end, he went to Alexandria to appeal in person to Athanasius the Great, urging him to ordain a bishop for Ethiopia. Athanasius the Great, however, ordained Frumentius himself as Abba Sälama (*Käsate Bīrhan*) the first bishop of the Matthean See (Ethiopia) around AD 340. Rufinus the Church historian preserved the eye-witness account of this story as narrated to him by Aedesius.<sup>1</sup>

The Markan See was not directly responsible for either the evangelisation of the Ethiopians or the planting of churches in Ethiopia. The former, controversially, was attributed to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) and the latter to Abba Sälama. *Käsate Bīrhan* excepted, all the prelates of the Ethiopian Church since were Egyptians, for over a thousand years until autocephaly was eventually granted in 1959.<sup>2</sup> During this long period of Coptic domination of the Abyssinian Church, many Alexandrian popes came and went but St. Cyril (378-444) holds a very special place in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as a teacher *par excellence*. A prolific writer and a seasoned exegete, Cyril is most admired for his landmark contribution to Christology. His detractors, then and now, however, accuse him of shrewdness in ecclesial politics and reprehensibility for his alleged indirect involvement in the vicious murdering of the popular mathematician

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<sup>1</sup> Rufinus, *Ecclesiastical History, in the Church History of Rufinus of Acquelia, Books 10-11*, trans. P. Armidon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Stuart C. Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria: The Metropolitan Episcopacy of Ethiopia*. Bibliotheca Nubica et Aethiopica series (Warszawa: Za's Pan, 1997). For the long struggle for the autocephalous status of the Ethiopian Church, cf. Merrit Boutros Ghali, 'Ethiopian Church Autocephaly' in Aziz S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopaedia*, Volume 4 (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 980-984.

Hypatia.<sup>3</sup> The Nine Saints, who came to Ethiopia around the fifth century, are credited for introducing Cyrillo-Alexandrian Christology to Ethiopia through their translation projects alongside their laity training programmes and founding of monasteries. The first chapter of our thesis, ‘**Alexandrian Christology Arrived**’, deals with this milestone in the doctrinal history of the Ethiopian Church. Considerations have been given to start this chapter with the advent of the Nine Saints rather than with the ascent of Frumentius to the throne of the Matthean See. The rationale for the inclusion of this otherwise well-known incident, that predates Cyril by a century, is to provide a historical context for the Alexandrian presence in and influence on Ethiopia. The most important sources for the Christology of Cyril, indeed for his theology in general, are, of course, his own writings, many of which have been translated into English.<sup>4</sup> The materials about the many aspects of Cyrillian theology are far too many to list here.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For a vigorous defence of Cyril against this charges, Cf. John McGuckin, ‘Cyril of Alexandria: A pastor and a Bishop’ in Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating (eds.), *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003),

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Saint. Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* by S. Cyril Archbishop of Alexandria, Vol. 2, Randell, T. (trans.), (London: Walter Smith, 1885); *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* by S. Cyril Archbishop of Alexandria, Vol. 1, Pusey, P. E. (trans.), Oxford: James Parker, 1874); *A Commentary upon the Gospel according to S. Luke* by S. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, 2 vols. Payne Smith, R. (trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859); reprinted in one volume (New York: Studion, 1983); *Cyril of Alexandria*, Russell, Norman (trans.), (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters*, Wickham, Lionel R. (ed. And trans.), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); *Five Tomes against Nestorius, Scholia on the Incarnation, Christ is One, Fragments against Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Synousiasts*, Pusey, P. E. (trans.), (Oxford: James Parker, 1881); *Letters 1-50*, Fathers of the Church Volume 76, McEnerney, J. I. (trans.), (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987); *Letters 51-110*, Fathers of the Church, Volume 77, McEnerney, J. I. (trans.), (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987); *On the Unity of Christ*, Translated and with introduction by John Anthony McGuckin (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> For full bibliography of texts of Cyril, their translations and secondary literature in modern European languages cf. St Cyril of Alexadria, , *Cyril of Alexandria. The Early Church Fathers Series*, Norman Russell (ed.), (London and New York: Rutledge, 2000); St, Cyril of Alexandria, *St. Cyril of Alexandria. The Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology and Texts*, John A. McGuckin (ed.), (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994) and Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating

The major sources of Ethiopian understanding of Cyril, however, are the *Dīrsanä Qerelos* (along with its traditional *Andimta* Commentary) as well as the *Haymanotä Abäw* and to a lesser degree the Liturgy.<sup>6</sup>

The second chapter, ‘**Alexandrian Christology Challenged**’, looks into further developments in the views of Ethiopian theologians during the sixteenth century. Ten centuries in the history of doctrine had elapsed between the end of our first chapter and the beginning of the second. Clearly, the fast forwarding move from the sixth century to the sixteenth century requires sound justification. In the ensuing millennium since the translation of the first two parts of *Dīrsanä Qerellos* around the end of the sixth century, there had been significant additions to Cyrillian corpus in Ethiopia.<sup>7</sup> The coherency and accuracy of Ethiopian interpretation(s) of Cyrillo-Alexandrian Christology, nevertheless, for the large part, remained unexamined, and hence unchanged. Furthermore, no attempt was made to expand the contours of Cyrillian theology into other themes stemming from his works as has been customary in Western theological tradition.<sup>8</sup>

The impetus to take a second look at the time-honoured Cyrillo-Alexandrian tradition, nonetheless, came unexpectedly as a secondary consequence of the invasion of the

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(eds.), *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Witold Witakowski, ‘Cyril of Alexandria’, in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 1, A-C, (Harrassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2003), 844-845.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. B. M. Weischer, ‘Historical and Philological Problems of the Axumitic Literature (especially in *Qerellos*)’, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 9, 1971, 83-93). Also Witakowski, ‘Cyril of Alexandria’, 844-845.

<sup>8</sup> For Example see M. A. Bermejo, *The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit according to Cyril of Alexandria* (Oña: Spain: Facultad de Teología, 1963); Bertold C. G. ‘Cyril of Alexandria and the Filioque’, *SP* 19 (1989), pp. 143-147; Brian E. Daley, ‘The Fullness of the Saving God: Cyril of Alexandria on the Holy Spirit’, in Weinandy, Thomas G. and Keating, Daniel A. (eds.), *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation*, (London and New York: Continuum and T&T Clark, 2003), pp. 75-112; Daniel A. Keating, ‘Divinization Cyril: The appropriation of Divine Life’ in Weinandy and Keating, *The Theology of St Cyril*, pp. 149-185. Also by the same author, ‘The Baptism of Jesus in Cyril of Alexandria: the Re-Creation of the Human Race’, *Pro Ecclesia* 8 (1999), pp. 201-222; W. J. Burghardt, *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1957).

Christian kingdom, from 1529-1543, by the Islamic forces of Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (c. 1507-1543), known locally simply as ‘Ahmad Grañ (= ‘Ahmad the Left-handed’). The beleaguered Emperor Libnä Dingil (1508-1540) implored for immediate military assistance from Portugal when the ancient Christian faith in Ethiopia faced the real danger of extinction. Fortunately, troops under the command of Cristovão da Gama arrived from Goa soon after Gälawdewos (1540-1559) succeeded his late father. The sweeping victories of Ahmad, albeit exaggerated at times, were given coverage from the perspectives of friends as well as foes.<sup>9</sup>

With the troops came the Jesuit mission, progressively seeking Ethiopia’s conversion from Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism, replacing the Cyrillo-Alexandrian tradition with Chalcedonian Christology and stamping out Hebraic and pagan elements from Abyssinian Christianity. The troops’ mission could be regarded a success for defeating the Islamic forces and killing their much feared leader Grañ after a series of hard-fought battles during one of which da Gama himself was taken captive, wounded and eventually decapitated. Despite their immense sacrifices, total commitment and short-lived triumph, the same may not be said, however, about the work of the missionaries. The first mission under Andrés de Oviedo (1518-1577) was abortive for all practical reasons. The great accomplishments of Pedro Paez were eventually reversed by the tactless and aggressive approach of successor Alfonzo Mendez resulting in a calamitous end to Jesuit missionary presence and activity in Ethiopia.

As far as the Ethiopians were concerned, irrespective of personality differences and strategic variances among the Roman Catholic patriarchs of Ethiopia, the theology of the Jesuits was regarded as a direct challenge to the long-established Cyrillo-Alexandrian Christology the country had held dear over the previous ten centuries. Consequently, debates were held between the missionaries and the priests during the eras of successive emperors from the time Gälawdewos. The nature and number of these debates had been contested.<sup>10</sup> We maintain the view that, at the very least, debates had

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<sup>9</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn `Abd al-Qādir Arabfaḡh, *Futuh Al-Habasha: The Conquest of Abyssinia (16<sup>th</sup> Century)*, Translated by Paul Lester Stenhouse (Hollywood, CA : Tsehai, 2003); Täklä S’adīq Mākuriya, *Yä-Grañ Ahmäd Wārära* (Addis Ababa: Bīrhaninna Sālam, 1974).

<sup>10</sup> Abba Ayyälä Täklä Haymanot (also known as Mario, da Abiy Addi P), whose PhD dissertation first published in Italian, *la doctrina della Chiesa Ethiopica Dissidente sull'unione ipostatica*, (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 147) (Rome: Pontificate Institutum Orientalium,

been held during the reigns of Gälawdewos, Zä-Dingil, Susinyos and Fasil.<sup>11</sup> The middle two, Zä-Dingil and Susinyos, publicly embraced Catholicism (the former losing his own life and throne as a result and the latter killing multitudes of dissidents who refused to embrace Catholicism) but Gälawdewos and Fasil maintained loyalty to Alexandria. We have attempted to show in Chapter 2 that in their view Ethiopian theologians were vigorously defending the Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy against the determined efforts of the missionaries to undermine it. It has to be admitted from the outset, nevertheless, that both history and recent scholarship show that the conflict

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1956), could, arguably, be treated as the first landmark contribution to Ethiopian Christology in a European language. Ayyälä, who argues that the first debate was held at the time of zä-Dingil rather than his predecessor, holds the view that Ethiopian Christology is pre-Chalcedonian rather than non-Chalcedonian and blames Alexandrian propaganda and Islamic encirclement of the country for her alienation from Rome. Later on when his book was published in Amharic, [Ayyälä Täklä Haymanot (Abba), *Yä-İtyop'ya Betä Kīrstyan silä Kīrstos Bahriyat Akalawi Tāwahdo yamītamnāw Tīmhiirt* (Asmara: P'et'ros Sila, 1958)], his view had generated angry responses from three Ethiopian theologians, not least, Admasu; Ayyalew and Täklä Mariam. Cf. Admasu Jänbäre (Mälkä Bīrhan), *Mäddlotä Amin: Yāhaymanot Mizan* (Addis Ababa: Tinsae-Zägubae Press, 1962); Ayalew Tamīru, *Mäčč Tällämmäddanna Kätäkula Zimdinna* (Addis Ababa: Tinsae-Zägubae Press, 1961) and Täklä Mariyam, M. M. *yäityop'pya beta Kīrstiyan Kīrstos and Akal and bahirey indāhonä yāmītamnāw Haymanot* (Addis Ababa, 1960). The response of the Orthodox theologians to Ayyälä's claim was the main theme Tesfazghi's Dissertation. Cf. Tesfazghi Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Theologians* (Rome: Pontificiae Institutum Studiorum Orientalum, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> The first debate held at the time of Gälawdewos was acknowledged by the Royal Chronicle of the emperor but not much was said about its proceedings. Cf. William E. Conzelman (ed.), *Chronique De Galāwdēwos*, Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des hautes études, Section 4, Sciences historiques et philologiques, 104 (Paris: E. Bouillon, 1985), Chapter 55, 63-64. What we knew about the proceedings of the debate was the information obtained from Admasu's *Mäddlotä Amin* whereby the position of the Jesuit missionaries was presented as a spectrum of heresies and teachings which the Ethiopian Orthodox Church rejects. We have to say emphatically that we do not accept the attribution of these teachings the Roman Catholic Church abhors upon the missionaries as factually correct. It is our position that this should, rather, be viewed as a polemical act of misrepresenting the opponent's position (Straw-man argument). This aside, Admasu's book is valuable in the sense that it shows Ethiopian theologians' view of the debates as well as providing a wealth of information for our third chapter, 'Alexandrian Theology Disputed.'

between Cyrillian and Roman Catholic Christologies should be best understood as semantic rather than substantive.<sup>12</sup> There is a good deal of literature, primary and secondary, on the history and various aspects of the activities of the Jesuits in Ethiopia.<sup>13</sup> Our interest, nevertheless, is limited to the Christological encounters between the native priests and the foreign missionaries.

Our third chapter, ‘**Alexandrian Christology Disputed**’, deals with developments following the tragic expulsion of the Jesuits from the country. The final debate and the subsequent brutal persecution of the Jesuits during Emperor Fasil certainly brought to an end the centuries-long dream of bringing Ethiopia into the Papal fold. It did not, however, bring about the closure to the on-going Christological disputes that was hoped for. The Alexandrian loyalists who had been united in their resolve to oppose Catholicisation of the Ethiopian Church found themselves at loggerheads with each other, regionally divided into three militant groups, over their view of Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy, each faction claiming exclusivity to the truth and accusing the

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<sup>12</sup> For example, Cf. Romandies, John S. ‘St. Cyril’s ‘One Physis or Hypostasis of God Logos the Incarnate’ and Chalcedon’ in Paul R. Fries and Tiran Nersoyan (eds.), *Christ in East and West* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), pp. 15-34; Samuel, V.C. ‘One Incarnate Nature of God the Word,’ in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (1964-65) 37-53; Meyendorff, John. ‘Chalcedonians and Monophysites after Chalcedon,’ in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (1964-65) 16-35.

<sup>13</sup> Pedro Páez, *History of Ethiopia*, 1622, edited by Isabel Boavida, Hervé Pennec and Manuel João Ramos; translated by Christopher Tribe. Hakluyt Society. Third series ; 23-24 (Farnham : Ashgate, 2011); Philip Caraman. *The Lost Empire: the Story of the Jesuits in Ethiopia 1555-1634* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985); Hervé Pennec, *Des Jésuites au Royaume du Prêtre Jean (Éthiopie): Stratégies, rencontres et tentatives d'implantation; 1495–1633* (Paris and Lisbon: Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, 2003); Girma Beshah and Merid Wolde Aregay, *The question of the union of the churches in Luso-Ethiopian Relations, 1500-1632* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar and Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1964); Also by Merid Wolde Aregay, ‘Japanese and Ethiopian Reactions to Jesuit Missionary Activities in the Sixteenth and Seventeen Centuries’ in Katsuyoshi Fukui et al. (eds.), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective: Papers of the 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Kyoto (1997), volume 1, 676-698; also *Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom 1508-1708: with special reference to the Galla Migration and their consequences* (London: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 1971); Täklä S’adīq Mäkuriya, *Yä-Ītyop’ya Tarik: Kā-ās’e Libnä Dīngil iskā As’e Tewodros* (Addis Ababa: Birhaninna Sālam, 1969).



others of heterodoxy of one kind or another. Since none of these parties ever tried to form a splinter group completely breaking away from the parent *Tāwahido* Church, they are described as a ‘school of thought’ or ‘tradition’ (Amharic=*Bahil*). The Ethiopian oral tradition blames foul play by Paez (equated with P’et’ros Qorānč’), mistaking him, rather, with Mendez, for the emergence of these schools of thought.

Even though *Tāwahdo*<sup>14</sup> was the preferred designation of each group, they nevertheless came to be known by the pejorative labels given them by their opponents: *Karra Haymanot* (Knife of Religion<sup>15</sup>), *Qibat* (Uncion) and *Yäs’ägga Lij*<sup>16</sup> (Son by Grace).<sup>17</sup> Getatchew Haile gave each of the three schools names that are easily understandable to Western readers: ‘Unionists’, ‘Uncionists’ and ‘Adoptionists’ respectively, though most recently he has used the epithets ‘Knifists’, ‘Uncionists’ and ‘Gracists’<sup>18</sup> (possibly

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<sup>14</sup> Probably a loan word from Syrian, *Tāwahido* is a theological term denoting the ‘hypostatic union.’ In Ethiopian theological literature the term could be a reference to any one of the three groups or the manner of the incarnation of the eternal Word.

<sup>15</sup> *Karra Haymanot* (‘Knife of Religion’) is a derogatory nick-name assigned to them for ‘cutting out’ the symbolic third birth of Jesus which both *Qibat* and *Sost Lüdät* accept. It is often shortened to just ‘*Karra*’ (‘knife’). Where they do not address themselves as *Tāwahido*, the adherents of *Karra* would prefer to be known as *Hulätt Lüdät* (‘Two Births’), a reference to their faith in the two births of Jesus, eternally from God the Father without a mother and in time from the Virgin Mary without a human father. In addition to the two births of Jesus (eternal and temporal) the *Hulätt Lüdät* group confess, both *Qibat* and *Yäs’ägga Lij* groups add a ‘third birth’, metaphorically speaking, from the Holy Spirit but for different reasons. Hence, their *Karra Haymanot* opponents collectively call them *Sost Lüdät* (‘Three Births’).

<sup>16</sup> *Sost Lüdät*, strictly speaking, is synonymous with *Yäs’ägga Lij*.

<sup>17</sup> See for example, Getatchew Haile (trans.), *The Faith of the Uncionists in the Ethiopian Church* (*Haymanot Mas’ihawit*), Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium; vol.518 Scriptorum aethiopicarum; Tomus 92 (Lovanii : Peeters, 1990); Yacob Beyene, *L’unizione di Cristo nella teologia etiopica*, (*Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 215) (Rome: Pontificiae Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1981); Donald Crummey, *Priests and Politicians: Protestant and Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia. 1830-1868* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); Kidanä Wäld Kifle, *Haymanotä Abäw Qäddämt, La foi des Pères anciens*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1986; *Mäs’hafä Säwasäw wä-Gis wä-Mäzgäbä Qalat Hadis*, Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1956.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Getatchew Haile, ‘Ethiopian Heresies and Controversies’ in Aziz S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopaedia*, Volume 4 (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 984-987; also by the same

to the annoyance of the first group whom he linked with the use of violence to make converts).

Through time, the theology of each group underwent some modifications, probably owing to imperial pressures to unite the country under one creed or as a result of curbing theological immoderation, but all of them remained true to their distinctive Christological formulae. Despite their unwavering loyalty to Alexandria, all of them, time and again, have been misconstrued by their opponents as well as by modern scholarship (historians and theologians alike). The *Yäs 'ägga Lij* party, arguably, was the most affected group in this regard, being portrayed as adoptionists, Nestorians or crypto-Catholics. We have attempted in Chapter 3 to clarify the respective Christologies of each school of thought, to make a case that the fight was about Ethiopian theologians' views of Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy and to establish that all of them fulfil the essential requirements of Cyrillo-Alexandrian tradition despite their mutual denunciations. For nearly three hundred years, depending on the theological disposition of the successive emperors, each group had their time at the helm of the Orthodox Church.<sup>19</sup>

The fourth chapter, '**Alexandrian Christology Prescribed**', deals with the elevation of the *Karra Haymanot* group to the status of the official position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the authentic expression of Alexandrian Christology in Ethiopia over and above the thriving *Yäs 'ägga Lij* group. Emperor Yohannis IV (1872-1889), accompanied by Minilik King of Shoa (= Emperor of Ethiopia, 1889-1913) convened and presided over a council at Borumeda (1878). Yohannis was famous for his staunchly pro-*Hullät Lüdät* stance but Minilik was a self-confessed moderate unlike his *Sost Lüdät* fanatic father, Sahlä Sillase, who forcibly expelled from his jurisdiction all the followers of *Hullät Lüdät* including the then Egyptian primate, Abba Sälama III. The proceedings of the Borumeda Council were recorded by Azaž Gäbrä Sillase T'inno, the

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author, 'Karra' in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 3, He-N (Harrasowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2007), 348-349. We prefer his latest terminology over and above the earlier ones as we have reservations in equating *Yäs 'ägga Lij* (*Sost Lüdät*) group with adoptionism.

<sup>19</sup> Tedros Abraha, 'Qəbat' in Sigbet Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 4, O-X, (Harrasowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2010), 267-270.

official chronicler of Emperor Minilik.<sup>20</sup> The theological rebuttal that was intentionally left out of Gäbrä Sillase's report had, fortunately, been preserved in *Aläqa Lämman's* memoir.<sup>21</sup> *Zikrä Liqawint*, albeit with some minor discrepancies with *Mäs'haḥfä Tizita*, had preserved the same material.<sup>22</sup>

Setting aside the dismal performance of the spokespersons of the *Sost Lidät* group at the Council that could easily have handed victory to their rivals anyway, the Council of Borumeda, in our view, was highly prejudiced in favour of *Karra Haymanot*.<sup>23</sup> To begin with, Emperor Yohannis was already in possession of a letter from the Alexandrian pope that specifically and summarily condemned the adherents of *Sost Lidät* (and *Qibat*), without showing their shortcomings, whilst declaring *Hulätt Lidät* as thoroughly Alexandrian, which the *Sost Lidät* groups attributed to Tigrean trickery. A close examination of the letter indeed shows the Alexandrian pope's ignorance of Ethiopian doctrinal and cultural intricacies and his failure to elucidate the basic tenets of Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy. Moreover, *Sost Lidät* scholars who had already been jailed for promoting their theology at Däbrä Libanos Monastery (supposedly their stronghold) were temporarily released to represent their group at the council only to be punished by

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<sup>20</sup> Gäbrä Sillase Tino (*S'ähafä Tizaz*), *Tarikä Zämän Zädagmawi Minilik* (Addis Ababa: [s.n.], 1967).

<sup>21</sup> Lämman Haylu (*Aläqa*). *Mäs'haḥfä Tizita Zä-Aläqa Lämman Haylu Wäldä Tarik*, Mengistu Lämman (ed.), (Addis Ababa: Bärhaninna Sälam, 1967). *Aläqa Lämman* (1868-1967) was a very important resource person about what transpired at the Council of Borumeda. Born in Mäqet, Wällo (not far from Borumeda), Lämman Haylu was a 10 year old child at the time of the Council. He studied under the most prominent scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church such as *Aläqa Tāt'amqo*, *Grageta Gäbrä Mädhin*, *Mäla'ikä Bärhan Wäldä Yohannis*. Most notably, he was mentored by *Mämihir Akalä Wäld*, the main spokesperson of the triumphant *Hulätt Lidät* group at the Council of Borumeda. Cf. Asfaw Damte, *Lämman Haylu Wäldä Tarik* in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 3, He-N, 494-495.

<sup>22</sup> Admasu Jänbäre (*Mälkä Bärhan*), *Mäs'haḥfä Qine (Zikrä Liqawint)* (Addis Ababa: Tinsa'e Zä-Guba'e, 1970). Admasu (1893-1970) was born in Godjam just fifteen years after the Council of Borumeda, while the memory of the council was still fresh. Like *Aläqa Lämman*, he had had a privileged education under the most prominent Orthodox scholars including *Mämihir Akalä Wäld*.

<sup>23</sup> Eloi Ficquet, 'Boru Meda', in Sigbet Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 1, A-C (Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 2003), 609.

the amputation of their tongues and limbs by the order of the ruthless emperor despite a unanimous plea for moderation from the congregation including their opponents. The emperor and the *Ič'č'äge*, furthermore, personally questioned the leaders of the *Sost Līdāt* group, officially siding with their *Hulätt Līdāt* opponents, rather than ensuring impartial arbitration. Based on this, we could not help but conclude that the papal letter, indeed the decision of the council, was the result of political considerations rather than theological reflection. In the view of the Ethiopian theologians, however, Borumeda was regarded as a victory for and on behalf of Alexandria.

# CHAPTER 1

## ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY ARRIVED: EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION

### *1.1. The Coming of Christianity to Ethiopia*

The official position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOTC) is that Christianity came to Ethiopia in three stages.<sup>1</sup> The Ethiopian eunuch who travelled to Jerusalem to take part in the worship of Yahweh on the day of Pentecost was the first person to bring the gospel to Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-39). The establishment of the episcopacy and the administration of sacraments in AD 328 inaugurated the second stage and the arrival of the nine non-Chalcedonian 'Syrian' saints ushered in the final stage of consolidation and expansion. We now turn our attention to a detailed discussion of each stage.

#### 1.1.1. The Ethiopian Eunuch

The identity of the 'Ethiopian' eunuch is a hotly debated subject. The central issue is not whether or not there were Christians in Ethiopia from very early on but if it is the modern day Ethiopia or the neighbouring country of the Republic of Sudan that has legitimate historical right to claim the 'Ethiopian' eunuch as one of their number. As a matter of national pride, the question of heritage would inevitably generate heat and this is no exception. Such was the intensity of the debate that the new edition of the Good News Bible version had to be withdrawn from printing after the Ethiopian Church and the Bible Society of Ethiopia mounted a strong protest to the United Bible Societies for the rendering of the Hebrew term 'Cush' as 'Sudan' rather than 'Ethiopia' in the relevant biblical texts.<sup>2</sup> The name 'Ethiopia' (along with its cognate forms such as 'Ethiopian' or 'Ethiopians') occurs in the

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<sup>1</sup> John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62-1992* (Nairobi: Paulines, 1994), 35. Also Archbishop Mekarios of Axum et al., *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Faith, Order and Ecumenical Relations* (Addis Ababa: Tinsa'e Printing Press), 113-129.

<sup>2</sup>The Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähido Church, 'Today's Ethiopia is Ethiopia of the Holy Scriptures, History and Antiquity', *EOTC* website (August 1990, <http://ethiopianorthodox.org/english/ethiopian/antiquity.html>). It is worth noting that among the major English Bible versions, it is only the New International Version (NIV) that opted for the Hebrew word 'Cush' instead of 'Ethiopia' in the passages above. When it comes to the Acts 8 passage, even the NIV has used 'Ethiopians' rather than 'Cushites.' In this sense, one can say, the Good News Bible version has gone too far to the left in the continuum into becoming a mere interpretation of rather than being a translation of Acts 8:27.

following books of the Bible: 2 Chronicles (12:3; 14:9-13; 16:8; 21:16); 2 Kings (19:9); Esther (1:1; 8:9); Job (28:19); Psalms (68:31; 87:4); Isaiah (11:11; 18:1; 20:3-5; 37:9; 43:3; 45:14); Jeremiah (13:23; 38:7-10; 38:10-12; 39:16; 46:9); Ezekiel (29:20; 30:4-9; 38:5); Daniel (11:43); Amos (9:7); Nehemiah (3:9); Zephaniah (2:12; 3:10); Judith (1:10); Esther (Greek) (1:1; 3:12; 8:9; 13:1; 16:1); 1 Esdras (3:2) and Acts (8:27). Most of these verses speak negatively about Ethiopia and are hardly referred to. Whilst Psalms 68:31, Jeremiah 13:23, Amos 9:7 and Acts 8:27 are the most quoted verses, as Richard Pankhurst rightly pointed out, the first of these four is held dearly by most Ethiopians as a divine promise for future material and spiritual blessings upon the country.<sup>3</sup> As Munro-Hay's brief analysis shows, there has been a great deal of confusion in the way the term 'Ethiopia' had been used by ancient and modern writers alike. The term could refer to the Axumite kingdom, Nubia and even India<sup>4</sup> New Testament (henceforth, 'N.T.') scholarship seems to suggest that the Ethiopian eunuch was a Nubian rather than an Abyssinian.<sup>5</sup>

Ethiopian tradition, regardless, continues to hold that the eunuch, who was a proselyte until his baptism by Philip, returned to his native country Ethiopia from his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and continued in worshipping the Lord and making disciples as a Christian. Ethiopians rest their claim on the fact that there is hardly any evidence that the Nubians converted to Judaism during the pre-Christianity era whilst pointing to the Jewish influences in Ethiopian culture (such as the observance of Saturday as the Sabbath; strict adherence to Jewish dietary rules; the practice of

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians* (Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart C. Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria: The Metropolitan Episcopacy of Ethiopia* (Wiesbaden: Warszawa, 1997), 11-14.

<sup>5</sup> I. Howard Marshall, 'Acts' in *Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series* (Leicester: IVP, 1980), 162; F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 226; Richard J. Dillon and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 'Acts of the Apostles' in Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (eds.), *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (London and Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd, 1968), 185. Dillon and Fitzmyer view the story of the Ethiopian eunuch as a direct fulfilment of the prophecy of Psalms 68:31 which stands in a stark contrast to the Ethiopians claim both in terms of the beneficiaries of the blessings (the Sudanese) as well as the time of the fulfilment (as a rather past event than a future occurrence).

male circumcision as stipulated in the Old Testament and others).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, they also argue that given the author of the Acts of the Apostles presented the miraculous conversion of the 'Ethiopian' eunuch as a paradigmatic fulfilment of the last phase of Jesus' commandment to his disciples to take the gospel 'to the end of the world' (Acts 1:8), rather than as an isolated incident, the conversion of Nubia to Christianity long after Alexandria and Ethiopia contradicts the biblical narrative.

#### 1.1.2. Frumentius and Aedesius

This brings us to the second phase namely, the establishment of the Axumite episcopacy and the administration of the sacraments. That Ethiopia accepted Christianity during the reign of King Ezana in the fourth century had been archeologically verified by the finding of inscriptions and coins whereby the symbols of disc and crescent depicting the king's devotion to the gods was later replaced by that of a Christian cross.<sup>7</sup> It was Rufinus, the Roman historian, who left us with a credible and detailed account of the incidence as narrated by Aedesius himself.<sup>8</sup> The story had been cited by several historians of the Ethiopian church.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For Jewish influences on Ethiopian culture and spirituality, Cf. E. Ullendorff, 'Hebraic-Jewish Elements in Abyssinian (Monophysite) Christianity', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 1956, 216-256; E. Hammerschmidt, 'Der Kult der äthiopischen Kirche', in F. Hermann, *Symbolik der Religionen X, Symbolik des orthodoxen und orientalischen Christentums* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1962: 214-233; F. Heyer, *Die Kirche Äthiopiens* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), 132-141; E. Isaac, 'An Obscure Component in Ethiopian Church History: An Examination of Various Theories pertaining to the problem of the origin and nature of Ethiopian Christianity', *Le Muséon: Revue d'Études Orientales* 85, 1972: 225-258.

<sup>7</sup> Stuart Munro-Hay, *Aksum: An African Civilisation of Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 202.

<sup>8</sup> Rufinus, *Ecclesiastical History*, in the *Church History of Rufinus of Acquielia*, Books 10-11, trans. P. Armidon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). The above text was taken from J. P. Migne (ed.), *Rufinus Historia Ecclesiastica, Patrologia Latina* 21, 478-479.

<sup>9</sup> Below are few examples: Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia (1270-1527)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 22; Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270* (Addis Ababa: United Printers, 1972), 97; E. A. W. Budge, *The Book of Saints of the Ethiopian Church* (Cambridge: University Press, 1928); Getatchew Haile, 'The Homily in Honor of St. Frumentius', *Analecta Bollandiana* XCII, 309-318; Also by the same author, 'Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation' in John H. Hays (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation, A-J* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), pp. 353-356 citing p. 353; F. A. Dombrowski, *Tanasee* 106. Eine Chronik der Herrscher Äthiopiens, Wiesbaden, 1983; B. W. W. Dombrowski and F. A. Dombrowski, 'Frumentius/Abba Salama. Zu den Nachrichten über die anfangen des Christentums in Äthiopien,' *Oriens Christianus* 68 (1984), 114-169; Munro-Hay, *Aksum*, 202-204; S. P. Pétridès, 'Essai sur l'évangélisation de l'Éthiopie, sa date et son protagoniste', *Abba Salama III*, 1972, pp. 208-352; Edward Ullendorff, 'Note on the Introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia', *Africa*, XIX

The first family who were central to Rufinus' story are King Ella Amida, his widow and minor son Ezana. According to the Ethiopian tradition, the monarch under question was Tazer (Tazena?) whose regal name was Säyifä Aräd; the queen was Ahïyewa (Sophia) and they had twin boys. Unlike Rufinus' history which is fairly simple and minimalist with respect to supernatural interventions, the Ethiopian narrative is virtually marinated by miracles and contains several details.<sup>10</sup> To begin with, Säyifä Aräd and Ahïyewa are portrayed as a godly couple who were praying to God for a child rather than pagans. Inspired by the story of Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 1), the queen decided to fast seven days and seven nights (Ge'ez = *Suba'e*) at the end of which she had a vision of a fruitful tree planted at the top of a mountain whose branches covered the whole earth. A certain man who was clothed with light and holding a golden rod fashioned in the shape of a cross brought two ladders and placed them on both sides of the tree. Puzzled by the revelation, Ahïyewa prayed to God for the interpretation of this vision and God kindly sent her the Archangel Michael who explained to her that the tree signifies the gospel; the mountain on top of which the tree was planted stands for Ethiopia; the fruit of the tree depicts religion; the branches represent the teachers; the person who was clothed with light was Frumentius and the two ladders are your unborn children. Whether or not Frumentius was known to the palace before the queen's vision, how he came to Ethiopia and what the queen understood by the term 'gospel' is not evident in the Ethiopian chronicle.

The queen gave birth to a twins, incidentally, on *Tahsas* 29th (January 7th = Ethiopian Christmas Day) in accordance to the vision she received from God. The boys, so we are told, had no resemblance to normal children in that they loved each other so much that one held their mother's breast for the other at feeding times; nor did they cry at all; instead they praised God at all times. They were raised according to the Jewish law and at the age of five were dedicated to serve the Lord and to live in the temple. Their father died when the children were twelve and his widow took

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(1949) 61-62; Cf. A. H. M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia* (Oxford: Clarendon), 26-27

<sup>10</sup> Haile Sillasse Alämayyāhu, *Tarikä Nägäst Abirha wä- As'biha* (Addis Ababa: n.a., 1996), 2-8.



### **He was anointed because He was Incarnated**

over government from her late husband as a regent on behalf of the princes. When the young royals came of age, it was mandatory that the regency of their mother should be dissolved and the oldest son be crowned. However, the fact that they had both been set apart for the temple ministry and that they were twins became a problem. After discerning God's will, as revealed to the high priest, it was decided that the boys would have a joint reign but the saintly princes refused to take the throne, sticking to their vow to serve God, until an angel urged them to accept the crown as God would use them to plant several Churches. They were given the throne names Ezana and Sezana after a splendid coronation ceremony. They ushered in a golden age for Ethiopia characterised by justice, welfare, egalitarianism and a total absence of crime.

The transition from Judaism to Christianity came as a natural progression. The sovereigns shared their concern with the high priest that Scripture refers to the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom, rather than to their kingdom, when it says *Ako bā'intā māngästinä ala bā'intā lidätä İgzinä Kīrstos wī'itu*. Upon hearing this, the Rabbi was marvelled and frankly confessed to them his ignorance of the matter. He told them about Frumentius who had been publicly preaching that Ethiopians have had faith in God and were circumcised but had lacked the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion since the time of Ella Amida. It is obvious from the chronicle that the two kings did not seem to know Frumentius. Frumentius was summoned to the palace to explain to them about the mystery of the incarnation. He taught them about Christ, beginning with the prophecies about him, his birth, teachings, crucifixion and death, resurrection and ascension and the Great Commission. The two kings pleaded with Frumentius to spread this good news throughout their kingdom but Frumentius told them he had no mandate to ordain deacons or administer sacraments and told them that this was the prerogative of the archbishop of Alexandria. Ezana and Sezana sent a letter to Athanasius the Great via Frumentius asking him to send them a bishop to lead and to teach them along with abundant gold and silver as a present. Athanasius, however, ordained Frumentius himself and sent him back to Ethiopia as Abba Sälama. Upon his arrival, Ezana and

Sezana were the first to be baptized and they were given the baptismal names of Abīrha and As’bīha.

The attribution of As’bīha and Abīrha, nonetheless, has been a matter of debate with divergent views ranging from one individual (Ezana) with two names (Abīrha and As’bīha) to two individuals (known by the name Ezana) who lived hundreds of years apart. Munro-Hay suggests that Abīrha and As’bīha could be two successive names of the same person Ezana rather than names belonging to two separate people.<sup>11</sup> Ullendorff as well as Jones and Monroe see it as a historical discrepancy. Ullendorff, for instance, maintains that the tradition probably could have confused Ezana with a fifth-century royal, Kaleb (also known as ‘Ella As’bīha’), who invaded Yemen to end the persecution of South Arabian Christians by a certain General Abīrha.<sup>12</sup> Jones and Monroe, who accept the view that Christianity was introduced during the joint reign of Ezana and Sezana, argue that equating the twin brothers with Abīrha and As’bīha was a historical fallacy for the latter two were not even siblings, let alone twins, and had lived two hundred years after Ezana and Sezana.<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, Prouty and Rosenfeld propose that there were two kings whose names were Abīrha in Ethiopia. The first was the same as Ezana (King, c. 325-350) and the second was the Ethiopian viceroy of Yemen who lived around AD 570.<sup>14</sup> De Blois moved the debate further on the continuum when he proposed the existence of two Ezanas; the fourth-century king at the time of the ordination of Frumentius who never converted to Christianity and Ezana, son of Ella Amida, who happened to be the first Ethiopian monarch to embrace Christianity around AD 518.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Munro-Hay, *Aksum*, 205.

<sup>12</sup> C.f. Ullendorff, ‘Note on the Introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia’, pp. 61-62.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosenfeld, *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*, African Historical Dictionaries, No. 32 (New Jersey and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1981), 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> De F. Blois, ‘Problems in Axumite Christology’, paper presented to the 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Paris, 1988.

Even though Alexandria had played no part in the introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia, the consecration of Frumentius as Abba Sälama,<sup>16</sup> the first bishop of Axum, by Athanasius the Great (AD 328-373) marked the introduction of Alexandrian Christology in Ethiopia and the beginning of a thousand-year relationship between the two churches whereby the Horn of African Church was placed under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Alexandria.<sup>17</sup> The ties between the two Churches went deeper than a mere institutional hierarchy as the primates of the Ethiopian Church (known as metropolitans of Axum), Abba Sälama excepted, had to be native Egyptians without a power to ordain archbishops as sanctioned by the *Synodos* as well as the Fitha Nägäst.<sup>18</sup>

The Ethiopians have no power to create or choose a Patriarch, whose prelate must rather be under the authority of the Patriarch of Alexandria; or in case they should come at any time to have one among them in the place of the Patriarch and who should be styled Catholics, he shall not, notwithstanding that, have a right to ordain Archbishops as other Patriarchs have, having neither the honour nor the authority of a Patriarch; and if it should so happen that a council should be assembled in Greece, and this prelate should be present at it, he shall have the seventh place therein, next after the bishop of Seleucia; and in case he should at any time have power given to him to ordain Archbishops in his province, it shall not be lawful for him to advance any of the natives to that dignity; whosoever does not yield obedience to this, is excommunicated by the Synod.<sup>19</sup>

This was the case until 1948 when the Markan See was persuaded to acknowledge that there was no need for Egyptian metropolitans for Ethiopia. Three years later Basilyos was appointed the first native Ethiopian Metropolitan even though the Ethiopian Church (=Matthean see) was still under the jurisdiction of the Alexandrian pope (i.e. Markan See). After the decision of the Council of Cairo to relinquish its control of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in 1959, Ethiopia was

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<sup>16</sup> Abba Sälama is also known in Ethiopia by the epithet '*Käsate Bīrhan*', which means 'revealer of light' in recognition of his role in bringing the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ to Ethiopia.

<sup>17</sup> The history of Egyptian primates in Ethiopia is a well-documented matter. Cf. Ayele Teklahaymanot (Abba), 'The Egyptian Metropolitans of the Ethiopian Church', a paper read to the *Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa University, Nov. 1984, pp. 1-62 (subsequently published as Ayele Taklahaymanot, *The Egyptian Metropolitans of the Ethiopian Church*, *Orientalia Christiana periodica* 54, 1988, pp. 175-222); Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria*, 14-23; Meinardus, O. 'A Brief History of the Abunate of Ethiopia', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 58, 1962, pp. 39-65.

<sup>18</sup> Paulos Tzadua (Tra.), *Fetha Nagast: The Law of the Kings*. Edited by Peter Strauss (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria*, 17.

granted autocephaly status and Metropolitan Basīlyos was elevated to be the first Ethiopian patriarch by Pope Kyrilos VI of Alexandria (†1959-1971) in 1959.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.1.3. The Nine Saints

The third stage of consolidation and expansion, dubbed ‘a second conversion’ because of its lasting effects on the development of the Ethiopian Church, was initiated by the arrival of the Nine Saints believed to have migrated to Ethiopia due to the persecution of the non-Chalcedonians by the Byzantine Empire.<sup>21</sup> Zä-Mika’el Arägawi, Pantelewon, and Gärima are believed to be Romans. The rest came from different regions of the empire. Aftse (Asia Minor); Guba (Cilician) and Alef (Caesarean). Yimata came from Cosait; Liqanos from Constantinople and Sehma from Antioch.<sup>22</sup> They embarked on translation projects, the founding of monasteries and training of the laity.

#### A. Monasteries

The monasteries they founded were concentrated in the northern region of Tigray and, over fifteen centuries on, they are still operational.<sup>23</sup> Pantelewon and Liqanos founded monasteries in the vicinity of Axum; Aftse in Yeha; Gärima, Guba and Sehma in different parts of Adwa. Arägawi went to Däbrä Damo.

#### B. Translation Projects

The translation works of the Nine Saints focused on making the bible and patristic works available in the language of the vernacular to address the dearth of Christian literature that plagued the country in the two centuries that had elapsed since the time of Frumentius. In this thesis we limit ourselves to two of their most important works, namely the *Sämanya Ahadu* and the *Qerellos*.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968)34.

<sup>22</sup> Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria*, 76.

<sup>23</sup> Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria*, 76; Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Other than the *Sämanya Ahadu* and the *Qerellos*, the *S’adqan* had translated the monastic rules of the Rule of *Pachomius* as well as the *Physiologus*. Fritz Hommel edited and translated into German the Ethiopian version of the *Physiologus*. Cf. Fritz Hommel. *Die aethiopische Uebersetzung des Physiologus* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1877). According to Curley, the importance of the Ethiopian version of the *Physiologus* lies in its antiqueness, as one of the earliest translation from

a) The *Sämanya Ahadu*

The Ge'ez Bible the *S'adqan* translated is known as the *Sämanya Ahadu* (Ge'ez = 'Eighty-one'), because of the number of biblical books it consists of.<sup>25</sup> The names of the books that should make it the longer canon of the Ethiopian Church are enumerated in the *Sinodos* and the *Fitha Nägäst*, a canon law that relies on the former as its source.<sup>26</sup> However, Ethiopian biblical scholars, whilst adamant in proclaiming eighty-one books as authoritative, arrive at the number in various ways.<sup>27</sup> Two of these fourteen deuterocanonical books, the Book of Enoch and Jubilees, were discovered in their entirety only in the Ge'ez version.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding the time of the translation, Munro-Hay claims that biblical quotations found on inscriptions provide strong evidence that the bible was being translated into Ge'ez between the fifth to seventh centuries.<sup>29</sup> Most recently, an ancient gospel manuscript, named the *Gärima Gospels* after one of the Nine Saints, Abba Gärima, was discovered in Ethiopia's northern province of Tigray where he was believed to have lived and died. Following a carbon dating conducted in Oxford, the manuscript was dated 330-650 AD.<sup>30</sup>

b) The *Qerellos*

The *Qerellos*, also known as *Därsanä Qerellos*, is a translation into Ge'ez of selected works of Cyril of Alexandria (after whom the manuscript is named)

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the Greek original, as well as its fidelity to it. Cf., Michael J. Curley (trans.), *Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Nature Lore* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), xxvii.

<sup>25</sup> For a brief yet very informative discussion of the Ethiopian Canon, Cf., R. W. Cowley, 'The Biblical Canon Of The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Today', *Ostkirchliche Studien*, 1974, Volume 23, pp. 318-323.

<sup>26</sup> Cowley, 'Biblical Canon', 318.

<sup>27</sup> Cowley, 'Biblical Canon', 318.

<sup>28</sup> Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Munro-Hay, *Aksum*, 208.

<sup>30</sup> For the full version of the Newspaper article, see Martin Bailey, 'Discovery of earliest illuminated manuscript: Revised dating places Garima Gospels before 650—none from Ethiopia previously dated before 12th century' *The Art Newspaper*, Issue 214, June 2010. For the online version of the article that was published in July 2010, Cf., <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Discovery-of-earliest-illuminated-manuscript%20%20/20990>.

and other Church Fathers.<sup>31</sup> *Qerellos* consists of four parts. The first of these contains three voluminous treatises (two *On the Right Faith* to Emperor Theodosius and his sisters Arcadia and Marina,<sup>32</sup> and the *Dialogue*) followed by fifteen homilies by Cyril himself and other Church Fathers.<sup>33</sup> The second part consists of seven homilies: four Trinitarian writings by Epiphanius of Salamis, Severian of Gabala and Gregory Thaumaturgos – authors who died many years before the Council of Ephesus; one Christological-mariological sermon by Proclus of Cyzikos and two deliberations of Cyril of Alexandria on the doctrine of Melchizedek. The first two parts of the *Qerellos* are believed to have been translated into Ge'ez at the latest in the early 6th century AD.<sup>34</sup> The third part, translated in the 12th or 13th century, was made up of four polemic treatises devoted to the exposition of the Nicaean Creed and the figure of Melchizedek as well as the condemnation of Arius, Nestorius, Severus of Antioch, Macedonius, Paul of Samosata and, of course, the Chalcedonians whilst The fourth and the last part, the biography of Cyril, which some manuscripts omit, is a 16th- or 17th-century addition.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> B. M. Weischer edited and translated the manuscript into German in four volumes. *Qerellos volume I: Der Prosphonetikos 'Über den rechten Glauben' des Kyrillos von Alexandrien an Theodosios II* (Gluckstadt: J. J. Augustin, 1973). *Qerellos volume II: Der Prosphonetikos 'Über den rechten Glauben' des Kyrillos von Alexandrien an Arkadia und Marina* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1993). *Qerellos volume III: Der Dialogue 'Daß Christus einer ist' des Kyrillos von Alexandrien* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1977). *Qerellos volume IV/Part One: Homilinen und Briefe zum Konzil von Ephesos* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979). *Qerellos volume IV/Part Two: Traktate des Epiphanius von Cypem und des Proklos von Kyzikos* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979). *Qerellos volume IV/Part Three: Traktate des Severianos von Gabala, Gregorios Thaumaturgos und Kyrillos von Alexandrien* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1980). Our research will be based on his edition.

<sup>32</sup> The letter was addressed 'To the Most Pious Princesses'. Scholars are of the opinions that it was sent to Arcadia and Marina, the sisters of Emperor Theodosius. Holum, however, argues that Cyril most likely addressed it 'To the holy virgins' and sent it off to the court of Pulcheria and her sisters. Kenneth Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 148.

<sup>33</sup> Theodotus of Ancyra, Severus of Synnada, Acacius of Melitene, Reginus of Cyprus, Eusebius of Heraclea, Firmus of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Juvenal of Jerusalem and John of Antioch on the Second Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (These homilies are not found in the Minutes of the Council).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. B. M. Weischer. 'Historical and Philological Problems of the Axumitic Literature (especially in *Qerellos*)', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 9, 1971, pp. 83-93.

<sup>35</sup> Weischer, 'Historical and Philological Problems', 83-99.

*Qerellos* holds a very special place in Ethiopia. One can find Jewish, Syrian and Arabic influences in Ethiopian Christianity.<sup>36</sup> It was Alexandria, however, that had a lasting impact on the Ethiopian Church in matters of doctrine – especially Christology – all because of the *Qerellos*. Speaking of this Cyrillo-Alexandrian influence, Grillmeier, in his *Christ in Christian Traditions*, pointed out:

Cyril the ‘father of dogmas’ did not survive only in Alexandria and Egypt. In a peculiar way he was also present very early in Ethiopia, especially through the so-called *Qerellos*, the translation into Ethiopic of the collection of Cyrillian and other writings now sufficiently available to us. To it Ethiopian theology and spirituality may owe – to mention only this – the theme of anointment, which also, unfortunately, unleashed centuries-long disagreement. It will be the task of scholarship to research more thoroughly Cyril’s teaching of anointment and his pneumatology in general and to compare them with Ethiopian doctrinal history and spirituality.<sup>37</sup>

Sergew agrees:

The doctrinal position of the Ethiopian Church was defined finally in the sixth century. For this purpose, the book known as *Qerlos* (Cyril) was translated from Greek into Ge’ez. In spite of the title, this book is not exclusively devoted to the dogmatic homilies of Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, but also contains those of other Church Fathers of the fourth and the first half of the fifth century. It is on this book that the doctrine of the Ethiopian Church is largely based.<sup>38</sup>

In the words of Weischer, *Qerellos* is ‘the dogmatic patristic compendium and the fundamental theological book of the Ethiopian Church’.<sup>39</sup> Ricci also affirms that *Qerellos* is ‘a work of great relevance to the theological teaching of the Ethiopian Church’.<sup>40</sup>

Another source of Cyrillian theology in Ethiopia is the *Andimta* Commentary on *Dīrsanä Qerlos*. Ethiopians’ access to the Cyrillian corpus

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<sup>36</sup>We have elsewhere in this thesis pointed out the Jewish influences on Ethiopian culture and spirituality. For Syrian influences, Cf. W. Witakowski, ‘Syrian Influences in Ethiopian Culture’, *Orientalia Suecana* 38-39, 1989/90, 191-202; E. Cerulli, *Storia della letteratura etiopica* (Milan, 1961: 189-190; A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog. Sa vie, ses écrits, Sa théologie*, (Louvain, 1963, 291-293)

<sup>37</sup>Aloys Grillmeier, S. J. Trans. O. C. Dean. *Christ in Christian Tradition Volume Two, Part Four: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590- 604) The Church of Alexandria, With Nubia and Ethiopia after 451* (London: Mowbray, 1996), 392.

<sup>38</sup>Sergew, *Ancient and Modern History of Ethiopia*, 121.

<sup>39</sup>Weischer, ‘Historical and Philological Problems’, 83-93.

<sup>40</sup>Lanfranco Ricci, ‘Ethiopian Christian Literature’, in Aziz S. Atiya (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopaedia* Vol.3 (New York: Macmillan, 1991) 976.

is not limited to *Dirsanä Qerlos* and the Amharic commentary on it. Substantial segments of two of the most important documents of the Ethiopian Church, *Haymanotä Abäw* and *Mäs'hafä Qiddasse*, are also devoted to the teachings of Cyril of Alexandria.

If Frumentius was fundamental in introducing the Alexandrian and Ethiopian Churches, establishing an organic link between the two, the works of the Nine Saints deepened the Ethio-Alexandrian relationship from sending and receiving to that of a doctrinal unity through the translation of the works of Cyril of Alexandria to whose life, career and theology we next turn our attention.

### ***1.2. The Life and Works of Cyril of Alexandria***

#### **1.2.1. Early Years**

We know very little about the early life of Cyril. According to the seventh-century author John of Nikiu, he was born in around 378 AD in the small town of Theodosius (probably the present-day village of Mahalla el Kobra) in Lower Egypt.<sup>41</sup> We do not know about his paternal side but his maternal grandparents, both of them Christians, died at a fairly young age and were survived by a teenage son, who later became Theophilus of Alexandria (385-412), and a baby girl who became Cyril's mother. Theophilus brought up his orphaned little sister as well as modelling his nephew Cyril after himself. Prestige portrays Theophilus as 'an active and judicious administrator with a passion for church-building, who retained the respect of Synesius but whose head was turned by power, an unscrupulous controversialist and an ambitious and despotic intriguer'.<sup>42</sup>

When Cyril was about twelve years of age, Theophilus summoned him to Alexandria to provide him with access to privileged education, thereby paving the way for him to succeed him after his departure. The education of Cyril has been a matter of speculation among

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<sup>41</sup> R. H. Charles (tr.), *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu*, translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic text (London: Williams & Norgate, 1916) 76. Also John A. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology and Texts* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004) 2; Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2000) 4.

<sup>42</sup> G. L. Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics* (London: S.P.C.K., 1954) 123.



scholars, although in very general terms, Cyril himself had once touched upon his educational background in defence of his orthodoxy at the Council of Ephesus: ‘We have never entertained the ideas of Apollinarius or Arius or Eunomius, but from an early age we have studied the Holy Scriptures and have been nurtured at the hands of holy and orthodox fathers.’<sup>43</sup> That he had received a good instruction in biblical studies is pretty obvious from the phrase ‘we have studied the Holy Scriptures’ and demonstrably visible from the Old and New Testament commentaries he authored. What is not as clear is what he meant by ‘holy and orthodox fathers’. Who are the ‘holy and orthodox fathers’ Cyril was referring to? Was that a reference to his training in patristics? Russell concludes that the phrase could be a reference to the patristic influences in his life; namely, Didymus the Blind, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, but most importantly to Athanasius of Alexandria.<sup>44</sup> Wickham, noting the key role Theophilus played in bringing up his nephew and acknowledging Athanasius’s noticeable influence in Cyril’s writings, nonetheless interpreted the clause as an allusion the monks of Egypt for whom, like his uncle Theophilus, Cyril had a great respect.<sup>45</sup> Cyril slightly modified his defence of orthodoxy in his letter to Acacius of Beroea (*EP. 33*).

I have always been orthodox and was brought up in the care of an orthodox father, and have never shared the opinions of Apollinaris, God forbid, or Arius or Eunomius or any other heretic. I anathematise them.<sup>46</sup>

For McGuckin, that ‘orthodox father’ who brought up Cyril in the orthodox faith was none other than his uncle and immediate predecessor, Theophilus of Alexandria.<sup>47</sup>

Based on what we know about the Egyptian educational system during the fifth century, Cyril’s formal education would have concentrated on grammar for twelve-to-fourteen year olds (AD 390-392); five years of rhetoric and humanities between the ages fifteen and twenty (AD 393-397) followed by biblical and theological instructions at a higher level, initially under the great exegete and theologian Didymus the Blind until his death in 398, as well as by other distinguished teachers until AD 402 after which time he began his

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<sup>43</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 5; Lionel R. Wickham (ed. & tr.), *Selected Letters: Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford Early Christian Texts) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), xiii.

<sup>44</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Wickham, *Selected Letters*, xii-xiii.

<sup>46</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 339.

<sup>47</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 339, n. 7.

illustrious career.<sup>48</sup> Judging by his Cyril's writings, Wickham argues that the writings exhibit his mastery of biblical and patristic literature but a lack of interest and, maybe, depth in secular sciences such as philosophy or secular history unlike the Cappadocians and Augustine.<sup>49</sup> He acquired exegetical skills and profound knowledge of the Scriptures as well as that of the writings of the Fathers especially Athanasius, Gregory the theologian and John Chrysostom.

### 1.2.2. Career

Completing his formal education at around AD 402, Cyril took up a job that involved intellectual and administrative duties as a lector and personal assistant to Theophilus in 403; probably the same year he accompanied his uncle to the Council of Oak that condemned John Chrysostom.<sup>50</sup> This could be verified from Cyril's letter to Acacius of Beroea in which he attempted to give justification for Nestorius' condemnation at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431 before the arrival of the Antiochene delegates by making a parallel with John Chrysostom's deposition in absentia after his failure to attend the Synod of Oak (AD 403) three decades earlier.

I would like your Holiness to recall something that has a useful bearing on present affairs. When your Holy Synod formerly gathered in the great city of Constantinople, I myself happened to be one of the attendants.<sup>51</sup>

By the time of Theophilus' death in 412, Cyril had already acquired significant work experience on top of his prestigious academic qualifications along with the rare privilege of personal mentoring by the departing patriarch which made him the favourite contender to the throne of the Markan See. We owe it to Socrates for what transpired in the aftermath of the death of the Head of the Alexandrian Church.<sup>52</sup> According to this historian, the secular

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<sup>48</sup> F. M. Abel, 'Cyril d'Alexandrie dans avec la Palestine' in *Krilliana* (Cairo: n.a, 1947) pp.203-230 citing p. 230, cited by McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 4; H. I. Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity*, translated by G. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956) 142-185 and 219-313; R. Kaster, *Guardians of Language* (Bekerey: University of California Press, 1988) 72-95; Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 4-5.

<sup>49</sup> Wickham, *Selected letters*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>50</sup> McGuckin, *On the Unity of Christ*, 11; Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 6;

<sup>51</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 338.

<sup>52</sup> Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastes*, Migne (tr.), *Patrologia*, Series Latina (5)7.7. For the full version of Cyril's ascension to the throne of the Markan See, Cf., J. Rougé, 'Les débuts de l'épiscopat de Cyrille d' Alexandrie et le Code Théodosien' in *Alexandria, Hellenisme, judaïsme et christianisme*

rulers, with the backing of the army, nominated Timothy the archdeacon as their candidate for the Patriarch in their desperation to stop Cyril from succeeding his uncle so that they could bring to an end the controversial policies of Theophilus that caused great disturbances and grievances. Nevertheless, with the *parabalani*, serving as his private militia, resolutely on Cyril's side, violent rioting and fighting broke out in the city. After three days of resistance the authorities were forced to concede defeat and Cyril was installed as Patriarch of Alexandria.<sup>53</sup>

The appellations given to him by friends and foes alike portray Cyril's reign as more of a continuance of the old rather than the dawning of a new era. Isidore of Pelusium, possibly his former mentor and one of the few people who enjoyed freedom of speech (*parrhēsia*) with the patriarch, for instance, called him 'His uncle's nephew' whilst others preferred similar labels such as 'the new Theophilus' or 'the nephew of the Egyptian Pharaoh', another reference to Theophilus' iron sceptre.<sup>54</sup> At various times, Isidore was seen challenging the archbishop on theological subjects like demanding an explanation for the latter's subscription to the 'two natures' language of the Formula of Reunion; on ecclesiastical issues like pleading with Cyril to distance himself from his uncle's indiscretions and restoring John Chrysostom's name to the diptych; or on ethical considerations like urging Cyril to focus on his studies rather than engaging in politics.<sup>55</sup>

A good deal of continuity between the policies of Cyril and his predecessor should therefore be expected. Both men adopted a policy of intolerance toward Jews, pagans and heretics; showed unwavering allegiance to Rome; were totally devoted to frustrating the 'New Rome' claims of the See of Constantinople at any cost; and heavily relied on the support of monks and the use of a mob or ecclesiastical politics to their advantage.<sup>56</sup> However, Cyril should by no means be viewed as a replica of Theophilus for when necessary he showed his independence of mind. Cyril's exoneration of John Chrysostom, whom he said had committed canonical irregularities, to the point of describing him as a 'holy bishop' and citing his works, knowing fully his uncle's pivotal role in securing his

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à *Alexandrie. Mélanges offerts au P. Claude Mondesrt*, (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf., 1987) 339-349.

<sup>53</sup> Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastes*, 7.7.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, 84.102.

<sup>55</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 204, n. 3

<sup>56</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 6.

condemnation as personal secretary and accomplice at the Council of Oak, can be taken as proof.<sup>57</sup>

The first two years of Cyril's reign turned out to be pugnacious. Soon after he assumed office, Cyril targeted first the Novatians, then the Jews and lastly the pagans. One of his first acts as the new patriarch was to take full advantage of the imperial law that deprived heretics of the right of public worship and granted provisions for the confiscation of their property by attacking the Novatians, seizing their church buildings and confiscating their belongings, just as Pope Celestine had done in Rome before him.<sup>58</sup> A group of hardliners named after their founding leader, Novatian, a third-century Roman priest who refused to restore into fellowship Christians who lapsed in to paganism under persecution, they were already on the decline when Cyril came to power. For this reason, both Russell and McGuckin maintain that the misfortune of the sect would not have been anything more than a mere historical footnote had it not been for Socrates' popularisation of the incident.<sup>59</sup> Wickham, granting that the fact of the Novatian persecution cannot be denied, claims Socrates' partiality toward the members of the group may have distorted the picture to some degree.<sup>60</sup> The Novatians were granted safe haven in Constantinople for a while until Nestorius' callous persecution brought an end to their existence as a viable movement.<sup>61</sup>

After the Novatians, Cyril turned his attention to the large and prosperous Jewish community in Alexandria that had a long history there as one of its first settlers when Alexander the Great founded the city in 332 BC. In spite of the series of hardships they had been through, they were still a sizable community in fifth-century Alexandria.

It happened that the Jewish inhabitants of Alexandria were driven out of Alexandria by Cyril the bishop on the following account. The Alexandrian public is more delighted with tumult than any

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. H. Chadwick, 'Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy', *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 2 (1951), pp. 159-162 citing p.146 and Wickham, *Selected Letters*, xiii. Also, John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, 84.102; McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 3.

<sup>58</sup> See Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7.7 (for their tribulation under Cyril); 7.11 (for Pope Celestine's persecution of them) and 7.29 (for their relative peace and prosperity in Constantinople until Nestorius came to power).

<sup>59</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 207, n. 28; McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 7-8.

<sup>60</sup> Wickham, *Selected Letters*, xvi.

<sup>61</sup> Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7.7; Robert L. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 54.

other people; and if any time it should find a pretext, breaks forth into the most intolerable excesses; for it never ceases from its turbulence without bloodshed.<sup>62</sup>

Alexandrian Christians and Jews had a long history of tainted relations. Wilken showed that Christian-Jewish relations in Alexandria during the first four centuries were characterised by disputes of both theological and exegetical nature and increasing hostility that culminated in a crisis level at the time of Cyril.<sup>63</sup> Indefatigable supporters of the Arians, the Jews were seen as primary perpetrators in the sacking the cathedral when Athanasius the Great was exiled. Fifty years later, in collaboration with the urban prefect, the Jewish community drove Patriarch Peter from the city and, unsurprisingly, they lent their support to Timothy the archdeacon during Cyril's patriarchal nomination campaign. Cyril, too, was blunt about his animosity toward the Jews. In his first Festal letter of 413 AD, he strongly denounced the Jews of his time, writing, for example, that they were 'more wicked than their forefathers who crucified Christ'.<sup>64</sup> At other times he scorned them as 'most deranged of all men', 'senseless', 'blind', 'god haters' and 'killers of the Lord'.

The mutual hatred between Cyril and the Hellenistic Jews in Alexandria reached breaking point when a meeting convened by Orestes, the Christian Urban prefect, to announce to the Jewish community the prohibition of certain forms of entertainments on the Sabbath, eventually degenerated into public disorder. Even though the meeting specifically targeted a Jewish audience, some Christians were present. Among those who were not welcome were a certain Heirax, a primary school master and a cheerleader at Cyril's sermons whom the Jews regarded as a trouble-maker. When the Prefect was alerted to his presence, driven by his jealousy of Cyril's ever-growing clout at the imperial circle, he arrested and tortured Heirax on suspicion of espionage and inciting public disorder. Cyril reacted by giving the Jewish leaders a stark and final ultimatum to stop their aggressions against his flock. Our main source for this is Cyril's contemporary Socrates.

It happened on the present occasion that a disturbance arose among the populace, not from a cause of any serious importance, but out of an evil that has become very popular in almost all the cities, viz, a fondness for dancing exhibition. In consequence of the Jews being disengaged from business on the Sabbath, and spending their time, not in hearing the law, but in theatrical amusements, dancers usually collect great crowds on that day, and disorder is almost invariably produced. And although this was in some degree controlled by the governor of Alexandria, nevertheless the Jews continued opposing these measures. And although they are always hostile to the Christians they were roused to still greater opposition against them on account of the dancers. When therefore Orestes the prefect

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<sup>62</sup> Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7.7; Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind*, , 54.

<sup>63</sup> Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind*, 40.

<sup>64</sup> C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 78.

## Chapter 1: Alexandrian Christology Arrived

was publishing an edict – for so they are accustomed to call public notices – in the theatre for the regulation of the shows, some of the Bishop Cyril's party were present to learn the nature of the orders about to be issued. There was among them a certain Heirax, a teacher of the rudimental branches of literature, and one who was a very enthusiastic listener of the bishop Cyril's sermon, and made himself conspicuous by his forwardness in applauding. When the Jews observed this person in the theatre, they immediately cried out that he had come there for no other purpose than to excite sedition among the people. Now Orestes had long regarded with jealousy the growing power of the bishops, because they encroached on the jurisdiction of the authorities appointed by the emperor, especially as Cyril wished to set spies over his proceedings; he therefore ordered Heirax to be seized, and publicly subjected him to the torture in the theatre. Cyril, on being informed of this, sent for the principal Jews, and threatened them with the utmost severities unless they desisted from their molestation of the Christians.

The ultimatum, however, was not taken with the utmost seriousness it deserved. Instead, ignoring the prelate's threats to their own peril, some members of the Jewish community came up with an elaborate scheme to further challenge the authority of the patriarch by launching another attack on the Christians. According to Socrates,

The Jewish populace on hearing these menaces, instead of suppressing their violence, only became more furious, and were led to form conspiracies of the destruction of the Christians; one of these was of so desperate a character as to cause their entire expulsion from Alexandria; this I shall now describe. Having agreed that each one of them should wear a ring on his finger made of the bark of a palm branch, for the sake of mutual recognition, they determined to make a nightly attack on the Christians. They therefore sent persons into the streets to raise an outcry that the church named after Alexander was on fire. Thus many Christians on hearing this ran out, some from one direction and some from another, in great anxiety to save the church. The Jews immediately fell upon and slew them; readily distinguishing each other by their rings.<sup>65</sup>

What the perpetrators of this attack did not realise was the fact that they were dealing with a very dangerous man. As Wickham perceptively put it, 'It will always have been unwise, and sometimes even physically dangerous, to meet Cyril as an opponent.'<sup>66</sup> In a sharp contrast to his distant predecessor Peter, this no-nonsense bishop's response was as swift as it was calamitous. Socrates describes the graphic image as follows:

At daybreak the authors of this atrocity could not be concealed: and Cyril, accompanied by an immense crowd of people, going to their synagogues – for so they call their house of prayer – took them away from them, and drove the Jews out of the city, permitting the multitude to plunder their goods. Thus the Jews who had inhabited the city from the time of Alexander the Macedonian were expelled from it, stripped of all they possessed, dispersed some in one direction and some in another. One of them, a physician named Adamantius, fled to Atticus, bishop of Constantinople, and professing Christianity, sometime afterwards returned to Alexandria and fixed his residence there. But Orestes the governor of Alexandria was filled with great indignation at these transactions, and was excessively grieved that a city of such magnitude should have been suddenly bereft of so large a portion of its population; he therefore at once communicated the whole affair to the emperor. Cyril also wrote to him, describing the outrageous conduct of the Jews.

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<sup>65</sup> Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 7.13 (trans. Zenos, 2:159-160)

<sup>66</sup> Wickham, *Selected Letters*, xvii.

Despite the vital contribution the Jewish people were making to the economy, the emperor did not share the prefect's indignation over the injustice of the punitive measures the prelate had taken against the whole community. Rather he

sent persons to Orestes who should mediate concerning reconciliation: for this the people had urged him to do. And when Orestes refused to friendly advances, Cyril extended toward him the book of the gospels, believing that respect for religion would induce him to lay aside his resentment ... , however, even this had no pacific effect on the prefect, but he persisted in implacable hostility against the bishop.

The emperor's ruling in favour of the Patriarch left the Alexandrian Jews as well as their advocate in a very vulnerable position.

This was followed by an intimidation campaign whereby five hundred militant monks from Nitria, claiming to fight for their Leader, descended on the city and denounced Orestes as a pagan. The prefect retorted, claiming that he was christened by the archbishop of Constantinople, knowingly or unknowingly, effectively distancing himself from the patriarch of Alexandria in favour of his arch-rival. Soon thereafter, altercation gave way to violence and Orestes suffered a head injury from a stone thrown at him by one of the fanatics. Ammonius, the alleged culprit, died in custody as a result of the severity of the torture to which he was subjected. As a matter of fact both Orestes and Cyril wrote a report and a counter report. Once again, the Emperor took the side of the patriarch. Even though Ammonius's death in reality had very little, if anything, to do with paganism, given that all of the main actors were confessing Christians, Cyril of Alexandria portrayed the deceased as a martyr of faith who was killed by pagans because of his heroic stance against idolatry and gave him an official funeral. The incident marked the next battleground for Cyril, namely the pagans.<sup>67</sup>

Theophilus and Cyril took identical stances in their determination to stamp out paganism, and to a differing degree they both had to rely on the use of physical violence as a means to an end. Cyril, however, incorporated into his battle-plan, unlike his predecessor, who

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<sup>67</sup> For the religious and socio-political landscape of fifth century Alexandria, Cf. Pierre Chuvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, translated by B. A. Archer, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100-400* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984) and Robert Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire* (London: Blackwell, 1992).

destroyed the Serapeum, a psychological/spiritual warfare by re-housing the relics of two Diocletianic martyrs, John and Cyrus (a doctor who treated for free the economically disadvantaged), renowned for their miraculous healing power, right in the middle of the town of Menouthis (East of Alexandria), the home turf of the Isis cult, a healing centre that attracted needy Christians and pagans alike as a Christian alternative.<sup>68</sup>

Whether or not Cyril had any direct or indirect involvement in Hypatia's heartless murder as part of his overall strategy to eradicate paganism has been a very polarizing issue.<sup>69</sup> His actions against the Isis cult, however, clearly were part of his war against paganism.

Hypatia's murder was, probably, the result of Cyril's policy of using the mob to advance his cause going seriously wrong. A daughter of Theon, the famous mathematician, Hypatia was the only intellectual who did not leave the country after Theophilus's assault on the Serapeum, the statue of a pagan cult in Alexandria, in 391. She was a national celebrity, highly respected by the Alexandrians (pagan, Jew and Christian communities alike) and proudly counting Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais among her many notable students.

The mindless attack on the distinguished Alexandrian Neo-Platonist philosopher was carried out by a Christian mob led by a cleric called Peter who assaulted her while she was travelling in the city. Dragged from her carriage to what used to be the Caesareum, now the Great Church of Alexandria, sited next door to Cyril's residence, Hypatia was striped and brutally stoned to death. Her body was then dismembered and burnt like as an object of pagan worship that would permanently be destroyed by first breaking into pieces and then burnt.

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<sup>68</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 11; McGuckin, 'The Influence of the Isis Cult on St Cyril of Alexandria's Christology', *Studia Patristica* 24, 191-199; also McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 16-17; D. Montserrat, 'Pilgrimage to the Shrine of SS Cyrus and John at Menouthis in Late Antiquity' in D. Frankfurter (ed.), *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1998).

<sup>69</sup> For the murder of Hypatia, legends surrounding her and Alexandrian Philosophy in the fifth Century see P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity. Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 115-117; Chuvins, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, 85-90; M. Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria*, Translated by F. Lyra (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 46-65; R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972), 143-145.



Cyril found it intolerable that Hypatia, not him, had the right of *parrhēsia*, freedom of speech and a privileged access to political authorities.

The peoples of Alexandria, shaken and enraged by this vicious murder that had brought disgrace upon the whole Christian community, surrounded the Patriarch's palace and openly denounced him as the 'nephew of Theophilus'. Furthermore, he was indirectly reprimanded by an imperial edict that banned the Patriarch from interference in civic matters and handed control of the *parabalani*, whose numbers were now reduced to 500, over to the urban prefect. The prohibition, nevertheless, was short-lived. The patriarch managed to regain everything he had lost as a result of his indirect involvement in the assassination of Hypatia in seventeen months. Moreover, he re-established his authority both in ecclesiastical and civil matters such that no clash between the prefect and the patriarch were reported thereafter.

Cyril's confrontation with paganism did not end there. As a determined reformer who had declared out and out war on paganism he now shifted his focus to the Isis cult, the last stronghold of Alexandrian paganism to attract the common people including Christians. This time, unlike in his previous strategy, Cyril did not use physical force. He rather fought the battle on a spiritual ground. To this end, he removed the relics of virgin martyrs Saint John and Saint Cyrus to Menouthis, the hometown of the Isis cult, and opened a Christian centre for healing. The Centre was intended to be a Christian alternative to and the direct antithesis of the pagan temple in more than one ways. Firstly, the virginal life style of the two martyrs was contrasted to that of the ritual sex of the followers of the cult. Furthermore, in direct opposition to the exorbitant price charged by the medical staff of the Isis temple, Cyril's centre was free of charge. Moreover, it was a match – an unequal match in fact – between Satan, and his corrupt forces of evil who displayed their creaturely power through the healers of the cult, and the Almighty God. In the words of Cyril himself,

The holy martyr saints Cyrus and John came out ready to do battle for the Christian religion. ... As their reward for their love of Christ they received the power to trample on Satan and expel the force of evil demons. Now that those who once were going astray have turned to the true and unmercenary healer, none of us need make up dreams, none of us cries out to the pilgrims: "The Mistress has spoken, and commands to do this or that". For

how can one be a Mistress and also a god expecting worship? Among the demons there are neither male nor female. What kind of character can they have when they want to be called by girls' names? Now the people trample on those brainless myths and worn-out deceptions of divinations, and instead are coming to the true and heavenly healers, those to whom the all-powerful God gave the authority to be able to effect cures when he said: Go and heal the sick. You received without charge, give without charge (Mt. 10:8).<sup>70</sup>

The next twelve years witnessed a period of consolidation during which Cyril applied himself to studying and writing. In this time of relative peace, that is until the beginning of the Christological controversy with Patriarch Nestorius of Constantinople in 428, he produced a massive exegetical work:<sup>71</sup> two major commentaries on the Pentateuch, *Adoration and Worship of God in Spirit and Truth* (hereafter 'Adoration') and *Glaphyra*; a huge five-volume commentary on Isaiah; a massive commentary on the Minor Prophets; a commentary on the Gospel of John in twelve books; and an amazing 160 homilies on the Gospel of Luke preserved in Syriac and many more Paschal letters that raise theological issues. Add to that the *Thesaurus*, *Dialogues on the Trinity* and some of his lost works and fragments of Old and New Testament interpretations. He was, undoubtedly, a prolific writer, unparalleled by any of his critics.

*Adoration* was a polemic against Judaism written in the form of a question and answer dialogue with a partner by the name of Palladius who wanted clarification on the compatibility of Jewish worship with the Christ event. Cyril, through his exegesis of selected passages from the Pentateuch concluded that Christians, not the Jews, are the true heirs of the promises made to Abraham.<sup>72</sup> Had it not been for the Christological controversy that broke out in 428, Cyril's name would have been known as a commentator. But his works before 428 were overshadowed by his massive works after that date.

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted by McGuckin, *St. Cyril of Alexandria*, 19.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Patrologia Graeca series, Vol. 68, 113-1125 and Vol. 69 respectively.

<sup>72</sup> For English translation of his work Cf. P. E. Pusey, *The Commentary on St. John*, Vol. 1, Library of Fathers of the Church (Oxford: James Parker, 1874) and T. Randell, *Commentary on St. John*, Vol. 2, Library of Fathers of the Church (Oxford: James Parker, 1885).

### 1.2.3. The Christological Controversy

When Patriarch Atticus, the predecessor of Sisinnius, died on 10 October 425, the contest turned ugly as Proclus the secretary of Atticus and Philip of Side resorted to malicious acts to bring their opponents into disrepute. The result between the two was even, though Sisinnius won the election, both candidates had lost their credibility. The death of Patriarch Sisinnius of Constantinople two years later on 24 December 427 rekindled the bitter rivalry between the aspirants to the patriarchal throne, Philip and Proclus, once again dividing the Church between different factions.<sup>73</sup> This undesirable situation forced Emperor Theodosius II to nominate a Patriarch who was not implicated in the feud. The Emperor chose Dalmatius, chief of the archimandrites, for the job but he turned down the imperial offer in favour of monastic life. Nestorius, abbot of the monastery of Euprepus near Antioch, with his impressive qualifications and background was unanimously nominated by the emperor and his advisors, and was consecrated on 10 April 428.

Born in northern Syria and raised in Antioch, Nestorius was an immensely gifted person, endowed with physical attractiveness, oratory and a clear and high-pitched voice. He had received literary and rhetorical training before he read theology. His educational credentials and dialectical skill won him the respect of the cultured aristocrats while his ascetic life was attractive to the monastic community. He was seen as a true successor to John Chrysostom, the ‘golden mouth’ of Antioch, who was still remembered and mourned in Constantinople two decades after his death. Unfortunately, despite his first-rate education, unparalleled natural gifts, indisputable personal integrity and spirituality, and the unswerving love and support he received from the Emperor and his wife Eudoxia, Nestorius’s reign was doomed to fail from the very beginning not so much for heterodoxy<sup>74</sup> (as important as that was), but for his lack of perceptiveness in relation to the dynamics of power in the Empire and his tactlessness in handling conflict.<sup>75</sup> Just five days after his inauguration, he began taking

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<sup>73</sup> Holum, *Theodosian Emperors*, 148.

<sup>74</sup> Many modern-day scholars think that Nestorius was Orthodox. E.g. F. Loofs, *Nestorius and His Place in the History of Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 95-100; Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics*, 249; M. V. Anastos, ‘Nestorius was Orthodox’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962) 117-140; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A & C Black, 1977<sup>5</sup>), 316;.

<sup>75</sup> Holum, *Theodosian Emperors*, 149.

drastic actions that made him many enemies. His first victims were the Arians, the Macedonians and Quartodecimans.<sup>76</sup> The Novatians, Borborians and Manichaeans were also persecuted. Powerless to stop the zealous patriarch, the Emperor and his advisors pleaded for restraint and time, to recruit replacements for many prominent generals who were the members of these sects, in order to avert the potential risk of making the empire vulnerable to invasion. Nestorius, nevertheless, disregarded their pleas and executed his plan. Following this Nestorius rushed through an order which was insensitive to the tradition and culture of the Constantinopolitans, in a purely Syrian style, that monks from the capital should stop their urban ministry among the people and close themselves in their monasteries in order to concentrate on liturgical functions. The policy went well with the autocrats because it stopped the monks from organising rallies against rulers whom they thought were inept or brutal but deeply offended the monks among whose numbers were archimandrite Dalmatius, Hypatius and Basil.<sup>77</sup> Dalmatius, chief of the archimandrites, was first in Theodosius's short-list for the position but he turned down the imperial offer in favour of a monastic life. Basil, a deacon from Antioch, interrupted and denounced Nestorius of Constantinople in the middle of a sermon. Subsequently Basil was seized, beaten and exiled but he was rescued by a mob that carried him all the way to the Church of St Euphemia where he received protection. Hypatius the monk was a confidant of Augusta Pulcheria. He took the extreme measure of removing the name of the reigning Patriarch from the diptychs of the Apostles Church near the Rufinianai so that no prayer was to be offered in Nestorius's name.

Notwithstanding his failure to win the love and support of the monastic community, which was fatal, as we shall see later, he alienated the populace by repressing entertainments such as miming, dancing, games, theatre and the circus. Determined to subdue the influential ladies of the capital, following Chrysostom's example, Nestorius, in his arrogance and at his own peril, clashed with, of all people, Aelia Pulcheria Augusta, the elder sister of the Emperor. What Nestorius, in his naivety, failed to appreciate was that Augusta, far from being just another princess, was, in fact, a highly respected and influential woman both in royal and ecclesiastical circles because of her special relationship with her brother, the

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<sup>76</sup> Quartodecimans are Christian sects who celebrate Easter on the Jewish Passover.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Holum, *Theodosian Emperresses*, 150.

Emperor, and her saintly life style, respectively.<sup>78</sup> It was she who had brought up Theodosius like a mother after they tragically lost their parents at a very young age. Moreover, her spirituality was considered above reproach in that ‘Although not technically a nun, she lived a life of consecrated virgin in the imperial palace, devoting her to prayer and good works’.<sup>79</sup> Consequently, she used to enjoy special treatment by the church such as having the altar covered with a robe she donated, having her portrait in the cathedral and entering through the royal door to receive the communion. Nestorius, however, did the unthinkable by removing her portrait and her altar-cloth from the cathedral but also by denying her access via the royal gate. Pulcheria, in anger, demanded an explanation for his acts claiming, to Nestorius’s utmost shock, that she had given birth to God. The Patriarch’s reply was a slap in the face: ‘You had given birth to Satan.’ That was the turning point in Nestorius’s career, the beginning of the end, as we shall later see.

Crisis on the political front was soon to be followed by a theological crisis when members of two feuding parties came to Nestorius seeking his verdict on whether or not it was appropriate to call the Virgin Mary ‘Mother of God’ (*Theotokos*) or ‘Mother of man’ (*anthropotokos*). Nestorius at first handled the matter wisely: without condemning one or the other. He opted for a third way and ruled that it is more biblical to call Mary ‘Mother of Christ’ (*Christotokos*). The dispute was temporarily settled and both parties seemed to be happy until the controversy erupted again after Anastatius, a member of the Patriarch’s entourage, preached this time in the presence of Nestorius himself – and by implication with his approval – in the church against calling Mary the *Theotokos*. The patriarch, backed by his chaplain, was himself drawn into the controversy and preached a series of sermons against calling the Virgin Mary *Theotokos*, this time openly condemning adherents of the practice as heretics. Reactions to the sermon ranged from confusion to anger, but the most challenging and educated response came from Proclus in the form of a sermon on 26

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<sup>78</sup> For the detailed discussion of the life of Aelia Pulcheria Augusta and her ascendancy over Emperor Theodosius II, see Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 77-111.

<sup>79</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 32. In his book, *The Bazaar of Heraclides*, Nestorius revealed that he had reported to Emperor Theodosius II that he would not honour as a bride of Christ Pulcheria, who in spite of her vow of virginity had had no less than seven lovers. He regarded her as a “contentious female” and identified one of her lovers by name as Paulinus. The Bishop did not announce the ignominy publicly but applied a formula used by his predecessors and therefore readily understood by the people (i.e. ‘weakness typical of young women’) to describe the situation. Cf. Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heraclides*, G. R. Driver and L. Hodgson (trans. and Eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 89; Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 153.

December 428 which was warmly received with huge acclaim both by clergy and laity in the Capital.<sup>80</sup>

She is the spiritual garden of the second Adam, the workshop of the unity of natures, the celebration of the saving exchange, the bridal chamber in which the Word espoused the flesh, the living natural bush which the fire of divine childbirth did not consume, the real swift cloud which supported corporeally him who rides on cherubim, the most pure fleece filled with heavenly dew, from which the Sheppard clothed the sheep ... Emmanuel as a man opened the gates of nature, but as God did not rapture the barrier of virginity. He came forth from the womb in a manner comparable to the way in which he entered by the faculty of hearing. He entered impassibly; he came forth ineffably ... Here is clear proof of holy Mary the *Theotokos*.

Nestorius, unhappy about both the theology of Proclus's sermon and the positive reaction to it, stood up to reply. An accomplished orator, he was determined to bring the people back to the 'truth'.

But matters did not go in accordance with Nestorius's expectations. Rather opposition began to grow both internally and externally. At home people like Eusebius<sup>81</sup> and Eustathius of Antioch accused the patriarch of embracing the two sons heresy of Paul of Samosata.<sup>82</sup> Internationally, the crisis attracted the attention of Cyril of Alexandria, and through him, eventually that of Pope Celestine of Rome. Cyril's antagonism to the Antiochene hermeneutics is evident in his commentary of the Fourth Gospel. Cyril's motive to join the controversy, however, has been the subject of considerable debate. Many believe that the theological motive was secondary to that of church politics. Nestorius was asked by the Emperor Theodosius to look into the appeal of some Egyptian monks who claimed to have been unjustly treated by the Patriarch of Alexandria. Alarmed by the royal decision and rejecting the idea of the supremacy of Constantinople over Alexandria, he transferred the issue on to a theological ground where he was certain to get the upper hand.<sup>83</sup> Cyril's first step was to devote his paschal letter of 429 to clarify the Christological position of the Alexandrian see on the debated themes of the unity of the person of Christ

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. ACO, I, 1, 1, 103-117 for the full text of Proclus's sermon.

<sup>81</sup> Later bishop of Dorylaeum. He was a lawyer and rhetoric teacher before assuming the bishopric.

<sup>82</sup> A fourth century heresy named after the main proponent that teaches ... Eusebius compared the sayings of Paul of Samosata with that of Nestorius while Eustathius was one of the first to openly excommunicate the Patriarch.

<sup>83</sup> For a detailed treatment of the topic, see Schwartz, 1928; Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 1982; Chadwick, 'Eucharist and Christology'.

and the Virgin Mary. Speaking of Mary he referred to her as God's mother (*mater theou*) rather than the controversial *Theotokos* at this stage.<sup>84</sup> This was followed by an encyclical letter to the monks of Egypt with a copy forwarded to Constantinople whereby he engaged himself with the issues raised by Nestorius in the latter's public address. In this circular letter Cyril argued that rejecting Mary's title of the *Theotokos* is a serious heresy, the same as denying the deity of Christ itself, and publicly ridiculed Nestorius for holding a position that was so out of tune with Apostolic teaching and patristic testimony. Nestorius's reaction was not difficult to envisage: he was annoyed by what he considered an act of aggression. Cyril, Nestorius claimed, should have sent him a private letter in a spirit of brotherly love first rather than vilifying him publicly. Upon hearing that Nestorius was offended by the content of his letter, Cyril wrote him what is known as the First Letter to Nestorius, in which he claimed that the disturbances in Constantinople are no more domestic affairs but have already spread, like a cancer, way beyond its environs, becoming a global concern the blame for which rests squarely upon none other than Nestorius's own head as the author of the problem. Nestorius, refusing to swallow his pride and misjudging the international rally behind the crafty bishop of Alexandria, replied by writing his first letter to Cyril and by asserting his canonical authority demanding (untimely) justification for the persecution of Roman monks accused of Pelagianism<sup>85</sup> by the throne of Peter and initiating a judicial review of the treatment of Alexandrian exiles by Cyril. Supervision from Constantinople was the last thing a Roman pope would tolerate and that successfully allied Rome to Alexandria.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, he invited Dorotheus, bishop Marcianopolis, to preach at the Great Church in Constantinople in his presence, a year after Proclus's sermon, where the latter openly anathematised everyone who called Mary *Theotokos*. Following this development, Cyril wrote his famous Second Letter to Nestorius in which he elaborated his Christology.

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 245-261. Also J. McEnerney I. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Letters 1-50* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1987).

<sup>85</sup> Named after Pelagius, a fifth century British ascetic monk based at Rome was perceived to have taught that human beings are able to take the initiative in their own salvation.

<sup>86</sup> Nestorius was exercising a canonical right whereby Constantinople was to exercise the dominion and glory of Rome as the new Rome. The Pope opposed this even though he was powerless to do something about it. Cyril cleverly used this grievance of the Pope to get His support. The Pope was certainly pleased to read Cyril's reason to write him as 'the longstanding custom of the churches persuade us to communicate with your Holiness...' Cf. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 276.

Both Nestorius and Cyril unswervingly upheld and defended the Nicene Christology that Jesus is fully God and fully human.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, both patriarchs unequivocally denied the charges of heresy made against them; Nestorius condemning the two sons teaching of Paul of Samosata and Cyril rejecting Apollinarianism. Nevertheless, that was not enough to convince either prelate to accept the orthodoxy of the other and relent. This was because both men were convinced that a heretical conclusion that would have a soteriological implication necessarily follows if the logic of his adversary's argument was to be followed through.<sup>88</sup> Cyril, accordingly, questioned that a Nestorian Christ, a mere individual, should be regarded as a Saviour while Nestorius doubted the credibility of a Cyrillian God-man, different only in name rather than substance from an Apollinarian Christ, to identify himself with and represent humanity without first being, by choice, everything we, mankind, are by nature, for in the most often quoted words of the famous Cappadocian Gregory of Nazianzus 'what is not assumed cannot be redeemed'.

We have already discussed elsewhere in this thesis the socio-political factors that invigorated the fall-out between these two men. Nestorius, a highly educated and pious person, failed to appreciate the power dynamics both of the empire and of Christendom, at his own peril, even though he had the unreserved support and loyalty of the Emperor and his queen, squandering every opportunity and the resources at his disposal. He ended up yearning for the anonymity and quiet life of the monastery which he lost once and for all when he accepted the Emperor's offer to fill the vacant See of Constantinople. In spite of earlier set-backs and seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Cyril, a shrewd and accomplished statesman, however, wasted no time and left no stone unturned in manoeuvring the situation to his advantage (at times through the use of violence and bribes

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<sup>87</sup> Nestorius's zeal for Nicaean Orthodoxy is evidently clear from the fact that the very first decision he made as the new patriarch of Constantinople was to persecute and eradicate the Arians and the Macedonians (which the Niceo-constantinople Council condemned along with other groups considered heretic such as Quartodecimans, Novatians, Borborians and Manichaeans disregarding the royal plea that his actions would endanger the very existence of the empire that defended the faith and installed him as its patriarch generously bestowing on his See the honours of Old Rome and the immeasurable wealth. Cf. Chapter 1 of this thesis.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 39; Florovsky, Georges, 'The Christological Dogma and its Terminology' in Greogorios, Paulos, Lazareth William H. and Nissiotis Nikos A. (eds.) *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite? Toward Convergence in Orthodox Christology* (Switzerland: Oikoumene, 1981), 121- 123.



among other tactics) to secure the backing of dignitaries, fellow bishops, the monastic community as well as the populace that Nestorius had needlessly alienated with his arrogance and indiscretion, in order gain ascendancy over his arch opponent. And Cyril got what he wanted: the banishment of Nestorius, reunion with the Eastern Churches who had initially sided with his enemy, and the recognition of his partisan synod as the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus.

Leaving aside external forces, there were other problem areas that hampered proper dialogue between the two parties. One of them was methodology. Norris and O’Keefe, among others, have addressed this issue extensively.<sup>89</sup> The warring patriarchs approached the central Christological question in different ways, following the schools of thought to which they belonged. Cyril’s approach was what is referred to as ‘*Katagoric*’, which was championed by the Alexandrian School. This approach takes the pre-existence of the eternal Word as the Second Person of the Trinity before his temporal birth from the Virgin Mary as ‘given’ and attempts to answer the question: how can this God be a real and fully human being without losing or compromising in any way his divinity? Nestorius’s approach, typical of the Antiochene school, however, was ‘*anagoric*’ in that he began with the man Jesus and asks: how can this individual, a man like us in every respect, born of a woman, be regarded as God without forfeiting his humanity or being changed into some kind of demi-god? Some scholars prefer the terms ‘Christology from above’ and ‘Christology from below’ but essentially they mean the same thing. The validity of both of these approaches is widely recognised today but it was not so at the time. Western Christology can generally be regarded as *anagoric* while the *katagoric* scheme is the norm in the East.

Semantics was another problematical area. Owing to the lack of a commonly agreed technical language at the time, Cyril and Nestorius understood the key theological terms in different ways. According to McGuckin,

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<sup>89</sup> For the two ways of approaching Christology, vid. R. A. Norris, ‘The Problem of Human Identity in Patristic Christological Speculation’, *Studia Patristica*, 17/1, 147-59; J. J. O’Keefe, *Interpreting the Angel. Cyril of Alexandria and Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentators on the Book of Malachi* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 1993).

## Chapter 1: Alexandrian Christology Arrived

As yet a technical theological vocabulary had not been forged to serve as the key for this lock (i.e. as to how humanness and divinity was united in the life of Christ). Nestorius and Cyril's great public argument was to be largely instrumental in creating this vocabulary. It was to be Nestorius's destiny, as well as his great misfortune, to be the spark that ignited the volatile mixture.<sup>90</sup>

Unlike in this modern age, when the notion of personhood is understood along scientific and psychological lines,<sup>91</sup> Cyril and Nestorius had no option other than to rely on the metaphysics of their day to articulate their respective theological stances. This left them with four Greek terms to grapple with, each with extremely fluid meanings: *ousia*, *physis*, *hypostasis* and *prosōpon*.<sup>92</sup> These terms were invented neither by Nestorius nor by Cyril but they were coined, rather, by previous generations of scholars in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. Until the fourth century, however, there was a great deal of confusion as to the meaning of these terms in the context of Trinitarian theology. Earlier theologians, Athanasius of Alexandria included, for example, regarded *ousia* and *hypostasis* as synonyms.<sup>93</sup> It fell upon the Cappadocian brothers (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa) to come up with the formula *mia ousia treis úpostaseis* (one *ousia* three *hypostases*) that brought a closure to the age-old Trinitarian controversy.<sup>94</sup> Subsequently, *ousia* and *hypostasis* were no more regarded as synonyms. The former was understood as 'essence' or 'substantial entity' and the latter (i.e. *hypostasis*) as 'existence in a particular mode'. *Ousia* corresponds in meaning to the Latin *substantia* and *hypostasis* to *persona*.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 137.

<sup>91</sup> See for example, James R. Beck and Bruce Demarest, *The Human person in Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2005).

<sup>92</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 138.

<sup>93</sup> For the detailed discussion of how the meanings of these terms took shape in the history of Christian theology, Cf. R. P. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*.

<sup>94</sup> Many have written on the Cappadocian contribution to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. Although brief on the Cappadocians' work, Marie-Odile Boulnois seminal work is still one of the best treatments of the subject. Cf. M.-O Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d'Alexandrie. Herméneutique, analyses philosophiques et argumentation théologique* (Collections des Etudes Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 143) (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Augustiniennes, 1994), p. 296-306.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology, Vol. 3: The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Westminster: the New man Press, 1960), 228.

What the fifth-century theologians attempted to do was to adapt the Trinitarian vocabulary to Christology. The process of adapting the Trinitarian terminology to Christology, however, was inundated by confusion and controversy, more or less like the doctrine of the Trinity itself. Russell rightly pointed out the complexity of the process when he said the four key words ‘were still in the process of becoming technical terms and are used by both protagonists in a fluid, not to say confusing, manner’.<sup>96</sup> This ‘confusion’ he was referring to was first of all caused by the fact that there was an overlap of meaning between the terms. But there is more to it: the key terms had both modern and antiquated meanings that were inconsistently adopted by the warring parties.<sup>97</sup> Let us now turn to the terms themselves.

Our starting point is *Ousia*. The basic meaning of *Ousia*, is ‘substance’, ‘essence’, ‘nature’, or ‘the irreducible being of something’, though this does not exhaust the term’s full range of meanings. In its Aristotelian form it could also mean ‘the universal’, ‘the genus’ or ‘the substratum’.<sup>98</sup> Let us use, after McGuckin, the notion of a unicorn to elaborate this point.

Ousia is a genus of a thing. One can think, for example, of the genus of ‘unicorn’. Such a genus exists, but only theoretically, not practically, or concretely. It does not exist, that is, ‘in reality’, as we would say today. Nonetheless, it makes sense to talk of the necessary characteristics of a unicorn such as its magical horn, its horse-like appearance, its whiteness, its beard and lion’s tail, and so on. Thus the genus of a unicorn is the ousia, that which makes up the essential being of a thing.<sup>99</sup>

The importance of the term *physis* for the Christological controversy cannot be exaggerated as it was the basis of Cyril’s infamous formula *mia fysis tou theou logou sesarkōmenē* (‘one incarnate nature of God the Word’).<sup>100</sup> We have discussed elsewhere in this thesis the Apollinarian origin of the formula and the ensuing suspicion and alarm it generated among the Antiochenes who, unlike their Alexandrian counterparts, were well acquainted with the writings of Apollinarius and the forgery techniques his disciples used to preserve his work from obliteration by his foes in the aftermath of his condemnation. Leaving aside the

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<sup>96</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 40.

<sup>97</sup> McGuckin illustrated this point taking the case of *hypostasis* and *physis*. Cyril used the ancient meaning of *physis* and the modern usage *hypostasis* while it was the other way round for Nestorius. Cf. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 139.

<sup>98</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 40; McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 138.

<sup>99</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 139.

<sup>100</sup> *Mia physis tou Theou Logou sesarkōmenē*.

question of origin, which has created a barrier to mutual communication and trust by itself, the exact meaning of *physis* itself is elusive in its own right. One can say that in the fifth century AD, *physis* was generally regarded to be synonymous with *ousia*<sup>101</sup> as it signifies everything *ousia* stands for: ‘nature’, ‘essence’ or ‘substratum’. Reverting to McGuckin’s example of a unicorn,

The notion of the *physis* of our unicorn is intimately related to this (i.e. *ousia*). It connotes what we might call the palpable and ‘physical’ characteristics of a unicorn such as outlined above – but always understanding that this possession of a *physis*-nature still does not necessarily imply that such a creature is real. The word *physis*, however, has taken our discussion of unicorns one step further into a more real or specific dimension than the base generic term *ousia* did.<sup>102</sup>

According to Ancient Alexandrian tradition, especially following Athanasius, however, *physis* also shares a meaning with *hypostasis*<sup>103</sup> in the sense of ‘concrete individual reality’ or ‘nature manifested in the physical world’.<sup>104</sup> Nestorius understood *physis* as synonymous with *ousia* but Cyril used it as equivalent with *hypostasis*.<sup>105</sup> Hence *mia physis tou Theou Logou sesarkōmenē* was the same, for Cyril, as saying ‘one incarnate *hypostasis* of God the Word’, while for his archenemy it was understood as ‘one incarnate *ousia* of God the Word’. Since *hypostasis* is what makes one person of the Trinity distinct from another (as in *mia ousia treis úpostaseis*), hence the expression of the individuality of each person, Cyril meant by ‘one *hypostasis* of the incarnate Word’ that it was the *hypostasis* of God the Son that was incarnated. In other words, it was the same distinct and real individual person called the eternal Word, and none other, who became a human being. But Nestorius neither understood nor accepted Cyril’s line of thinking. As is evident from his memoir, the *Bazaar*

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<sup>101</sup> ‘Physis’ in G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, DATE), IIIB.

<sup>102</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 139.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Hypostasis’ in Lampe, *Lexicon*, III.

<sup>104</sup> Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 40.

<sup>105</sup> This is an accurate description of Cyril’s position until the restoration of communion between the pro-Cyrrillian Churches and their Eastern opponents who backed Nestorius at the time of the Council of Ephesus (AD 431) but dissociate themselves from him by signing the Formula of Reunion of AD 433. Even though the charge of Apollinarianism against Cyril was lifted up, for the sake of reunion with the Churches in the East but to the dismay of some of his ardent supporters and contrary to his theological heritage, Cyril agreed to using *physis* in the sense of *ousia* rather than *hypostasis*. This anticipated the development of the terms into full-blown technical terms thirty years later at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). Cf. Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 40; McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 140.

of *Heracleides*,<sup>106</sup> he was as baffled by Cyril's logic at the time of his gruesome death (c. 451) as he was at the beginning of the controversy in AD 428, for '*mia physis*' would always mean only one thing to him: 'one composite nature' in the Apollinarian sense of divine-human fusion.

This brings us to *hypostasis*. Just like the other terms under consideration, *hypostasis* has both an antique and a modern sense. This time Cyril, who opted for the antique meaning when it came to *physis*, confusingly adopted the modern sense of *hypostasis*, while Nestorius, despite his insistence on the modern meaning of *physis*, happened, bizarrely, to espouse the antique meaning of *hypostasis*. In its ancient form, *hypostasis* was synonymous with *physis*. At the Synod of Alexandria held in AD 362, Athanasius, for example, claimed that '*hypostasis* means *ousia*, nothing more'.<sup>107</sup>

The cornerstone of Cyril's Christology is the doctrine of single subjectivity.<sup>108</sup> Cyril inherited this Alexandrian tradition from Athanasius. The doctrine affirms that it was the Word, the eternal Logos, who was made man from the Virgin Mary and, hence, all the actions of Jesus Christ – divine or human – were respectively the actions of the Lord acting in his own nature as God and acting in the flesh as human.<sup>109</sup> The Logos was the subject of the incarnation and every incarnate act.<sup>110</sup> For Cyril, the Word did not assume an individual human being called Jesus. That was a Nestorian blunder. According to Cyril, a fully human Christ was not an individual person who had a separate existence from the eternal Word even for a split of second; rather he was seen as 'a divine person who had chosen to live in human conditions'.<sup>111</sup> Even though it might seem trivial to modern readers, Cyril insists

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<sup>106</sup> *The Bazaar of Heracleides* was written about twenty years after the Christological controversy that brought about Nestorius's downfall erupted. As such it represents a more matured and considered thoughts of Nestorius. Even after nearly 20 years of reflection, Nestorius still do not see the line and logic of Cyril's argument.

<sup>107</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 141.

<sup>108</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 194-195.

<sup>109</sup> A. N. S. Lane, 'The Twelve Anathemas: An Exercise in *Theological Moderation*', 3, unpublished.

<sup>110</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 212.

<sup>111</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*,

that Christ should be referred to in the singular in any ordinary Christian conversation lest the end result be a double subject Christology.

One of the many images, metaphors and terms Cyril made use of to elucidate the single subject teaching was the term *hypostasis* which he knew had two meanings: ‘individual reality’ as well as ‘real’.<sup>112</sup> When he described the union of the human and the divine in Christ as hypostatic, he drew on the first sense of the term to assert that it was not a merger of some kind between two individuals, divine and human, but the humanisation of an otherwise eternal God, who is the eternal Word. For Cyril, hypostatic union is not the same as the union of hypostases (as Nestorius claims) for the Word united not with an individual man with a human nature (*ousia*) and corresponding human *hypostasis* but simply with a complete<sup>113</sup> human nature that lacks a human *hypostasis*. In response to those who were charging him with reducing the reality of the incarnation to a brainteaser, he took advantage of the second sense in order to talk about the manner of the incarnation – that it was an actual event or a ‘concrete reality’ rather than the result of sheer human abstraction.

For Cyril’s adversary,<sup>114</sup> on the other hand, nature (*physis*) was synonymous with essence (*ousia*), which can either be complete as in the case of humanity and divinity or incomplete like a soul and a body that need each other for their existence.<sup>115</sup> For every nature to be complete and recognisable, argues Nestorius, it has to retain its natural *prosopon* (*prosopon naturale*) and these two (i.e. nature and natural *prosopon*) together constitute *hypostasis* or

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<sup>112</sup> Cf. M. Richard. ‘L’introduction du mot ‘hypostase’ dans la théologie de l’incarnation’, *Mélanges de Science Religieuse* 2, 1945, 5-32, 243-270 for a detailed historical and philosophical treatment of the term.

<sup>113</sup> contra Apollinarius.

<sup>114</sup> It is not our purpose to discuss in full the christology of Nestorius of Constantinople in this dissertation. Our interest in Nestorius is to compare and contrast his theology with that of Cyril of Alexandria where it helps us to understand the latter better. However, for a full treatment of the Christology of Nestorius, cf. J. F. Bethune-Baker, *Nestorius and his Teaching* (Cambridge: University Press, 1908); Loofs, *Nestorius and his place in the History of Christian Doctrine*; R. V. Sellers, *Two Ancient Christologies. A Study of the Christological Thought of the Schools of Alexandria and Antioch in the Early History of Christian Doctrine* (London: SPCK, 1940), 107-201; L. I. Scipioni, *Nestorio e il concilio Sdi efeso. Storia, dogma, critica* (Millan: pubblicazioni della Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 1974), 94-148; Grillmeier, *The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia*, 443-83.

<sup>115</sup> Nestorius, *Bazaar of Heraclides*, 304; Grillmeier, *The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia*, 505-506.

*natura completa*.<sup>116</sup> According to Nestorius, nature does not exist without person and vice versa. To prove his point he draws a parallel between the usages of the terms in Trinitarian discussions of the previous century. 'There [in the Trinity] the *prosopa* exist not without *ousia*, nor here again [in the Incarnation] does the *ousia* exist without a *prosopon*, nor yet the *prosopon* without nature.'<sup>117</sup> Therefore, while he agreed with the Orthodox Fathers that Christ has two natures, human and divine, after the union, unlike them, he believed that he also has two *prosopa* after the union.<sup>118</sup> Consequently, contrary to what the Fathers taught, that the Logos is both nature and person while the flesh is only nature, Nestorius maintained that both the flesh and the Logos alike are both nature and *prosopon*.<sup>119</sup>

Thus to Nestorius, there were two persons with their respective natures before the union and these two persons with their respective natures continued to exist after the union, with the only difference that, while the two persons were united into one person, of which two persons were component parts, the two natures remained distinct from one another in that one person.<sup>120</sup> Nestorius's preferred term for this union of natures is 'conjunction' (*sunephia*) rather than *hypostasis* and in order to avoid the charge of dividing the one Christ, Nestorius used several qualifiers such as 'exact', 'perfect' and 'continuous'.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, Nestorius differentiated between a hypostatic or natural union that would happen between two incomplete but complementary natures, like a body and a soul that need each other's company in order to be complete, and a *prosopic* (voluntary) union between two complete and essentially different natures, such as humanity and divinity, that do not need each other for their existence.<sup>122</sup> He did, however, painstakingly argue his case

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<sup>116</sup> Grillmeier, *The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia*, 507.

<sup>117</sup> Nestorius, *Bazaar of Heraclides*, 247.

<sup>118</sup> Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers: Faith, Trinity and Incarnation* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970<sup>3</sup>), 455.

<sup>119</sup> Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 455.

<sup>120</sup> Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 461.

<sup>121</sup> Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 461; Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 314.

<sup>122</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 314-315.

that a voluntary union should not be confused with a ‘moral union’, a plea that never received a hearing in his lifetime.<sup>123</sup>

For every complete nature has no need of another nature that it may be and live, in that it has in it and has received [its whole] definition that it may be. For in a natural composition it seems that neither of those natures whereof it is [formed] is complete but they need one another that they may be and subsist. Even as the body has need of the soul that it may live, for it lives not of itself, and the soul has the need of the body that it may perceive . . . . How then dost thou predicate one nature of two whole natures, when the humanity is complete, needing not the union of the divinity to become man? . . . Nor was the divinity in need of the humanity . . . .<sup>124</sup>

Nestorius can envisage the union of divine and human natures only at the level of their respective natural *prosopon* through a single *prosopon* of union rather than at the level of *ousia* or *physis*. Any union, if at all, at the level of *ousia* would necessarily result in a ‘third something’ (*tertium quid*) or the complete absorption of the human *ousia* by that of the divine as humanity and divinity are substantially different and mutually exclusive.<sup>125</sup>

Cyril condemned Nestorius’s concept of union as heretical in the second, third and fourth anathematises of the twelve chapters he appended to his Third Letter to Nestorius.<sup>126</sup> The second article reads:

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<sup>123</sup> It’s only recently after the discovery of *The Bazaar of Heracleides* that Nestorius has begun to be seen in a more positive light by some scholars. His integrity has never been questioned but his orthodoxy, however, is far from the consensus.

<sup>124</sup> Nestorius, *Bazaar of Heraclides*, 304.

<sup>125</sup> Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and its Background* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 236. Also, Roberta Chestnut, ‘Nestorius’ Bazaar of Heracleides’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 29, 1978, 392-409, citing 403.

<sup>126</sup> His third letter was the most controversial of all his epistles that was meant to be deliberately provocative in order to leave Nestorius with no alternative other than either to recant his position and accept public humiliation thereby elevating Cyril and his Alexandrian see to the honorary position of the protector of doctrinal purity in the East or to reject the call to ‘repentance’ and face excommunication as a protagonist of the two sons Christology of Diodore. Attached to the letter were Pope Celestine’s letter that gives a mandate to Cyril to enforce the decision of the Roman council regarding Nestorius and his notorious twelve chapters that anathematise dissenters. The contentious letter, was delivered by hand to Nestorius on 30 November 431 and immediately Nestorius passed on only the appended twelve chapters to John of Antioch (for Nestorius’s letter to John of Antioch, cf. ACO I, 1, 1, pp. 93-96). The unbalanced Alexandrian letter, however, backfired and secured the breaking up of fellowship between Antioch and Alexandria rather than isolating Nestorius of Constantinople. Two prominent theologians from the Antiochene School, Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Andrew of Samosata, reacted by writing a critique of the chapters. Cyril spent the next two years, i.e. until fellowship is restored with John of Antioch after both parties agreed upon a common article of faith referred to as the Formulary of Reunion, trying to repair the damage caused



## He was anointed because He was Incarnated

If anyone does not confess that the Word of God the Father was hypostatically united to the flesh so as to be one Christ with his own flesh, that is the same one at once God and man, let him be anathema.

If article 2 anathematizes those who refused to subscribe to the hypostatic union, article 3 is a further and direct attack on those who held ‘conjunction’, as their manner of union as dividing the one Christ.

If anyone divides the hypostases of the one Christ after the union, connecting them only by a conjunction in terms of honour or dignity or sovereignty, and not rather by a combination in terms of natural union, let him be anathema.

Then comes his fourth anathema; leaving no stone unturned; dealing with prosopic union and the assumption of the Word of an individual man rather than human nature devoid of *hypostasis*.

If anyone interprets the sayings in the gospels and apostolic writings or the things said about Christ by the saints, or the things he says about himself as referring to two prosopa or hypostases, attributing some of them to a man conceived of as separate from the Word of God, and attributing others (as divine) exclusively to the Word of God the Father, let him be anathema.<sup>127</sup>

If the anathemas tell us what the Alexandrian bishop was reacting against, the relevant sections of his *Explanations to the Twelve Chapters* tell us why: be it rejection of natural or hypostatic union (anathematism 2), acceptance of ‘conjunction’ as the manner of the incarnation (anathematism 3) or apportioning the actions of the incarnate God between his humanity and divinity (anathematism 4), they all share a common denominator – i.e. they all militate against the single-subject Christology.

Cyril denies the charge made against him by his opponents that his acceptance of single subjectivity is tantamount to concurrence with Apollinarius in two ways: on the one hand he dissociated himself from Apollinarianism by confessing Christ to be fully man with a

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by his twelve chapters. One of the things he did was to write a commentary on the twelve chapters explaining his intended meaning (For the English translation of the explanation of Cyril’s twelve chapters, cf. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 282-293). He also wrote a reply to Andrew and Theodoret (contra Andrew, cf. *Adversus orientales episcopos* in ACO I, 1, 7, pp. 33-65 and against Theodoret, cf. *contra Theodoretum* in ACO I, 1, 6, pp. 107-46). Furthermore, in his letter to Acacius of Beroea Cyril actually admitted that the form and force of the letter was dictated by his war against Nestorius but argued that there was nothing unscriptural or contradictory to patristic teachings in them. Moreover, he declared his willingness to give further confidential elaboration to inquirers who doubted his orthodoxy provided that they reject Nestorius. In addition, once victory is secured over Nestorius, he also showed readiness to withdraw them for the sake of peace. For the Cyril’s Letter to Acacius, Cf. *Ep.* 33.8, ACO I, 1, 7, pp. 147-150; McEnerney, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Letters 1-50*, 128-135.; McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 340.

<sup>127</sup> For the Fourth Anathema, cf. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 274.

human soul as well as mind. But he also demonstrated that he is broad-minded by his readiness to accept the truth even if a heretic held it. In his letter to Eulogius,<sup>128</sup> the patriarch argues:

It is necessary to reply to such critics that we must not feel obliged to flee from and contradict every single thing that the heretics might say. For there are many things which they confess which we do too. For example, when the Arians say the Father is the Lord and maker of all, we surely do not flee from such an admission on that account? It is the same in the case of Nestorius, even if he does speak of two natures to signify the difference between the flesh and God the Word. For the nature of the Word is one thing, and that of the flesh quite another. But Nestorius does not confess the union along with us.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus,<sup>129</sup> who was infamous for the sarcastic comment he made at the death of the Patriarch, opposed single subject Christology as deficient because while Jesus can be said to be fully God, with divine *physis* and corresponding *hypostasis*, he cannot, in the same sense, be fully man for his human *physis* lacks, unlike other human beings, the accompanying human *hypostasis*.<sup>130</sup> But Cyril was quick to point out that the incarnation was a unique historical event for which no parallel can be found among the created order and that one cannot subscribe to the existence of two hypostases in Christ without also accepting the corollary doctrine of two sons – a theology with which neither Theodoret nor his Antiochene colleagues would want to be associated. By the time Theodoret wrote his *Eranistes*, however, his change of mind was evident from his adoption of the Cyrillian expression of single-*hypostasis*. Cyril's position, in a nutshell, was Christ is fully human without being man because he is God enfleshed.<sup>131</sup> For Cyril there is a big difference between confessing Christ as God enfleshed and God in the flesh, which is an Apollinarian pitfall.

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<sup>128</sup> Eulogius was a priest of Alexandria residing in Alexandria. The Letter was, believed to be written after the Formulary of Reunion of 433, probably before 435. The objective of the letter was to correct the extremist position of some eastern bishops that the employment of 'two natures' language in Christology is totally wrong. Cyril argues that it is right to speak of two natures in Christ as long as the unity of the human and divine natures is uncompromisingly maintained. For Cyril's letter to Eulogius, cf. Ep. 44, ACO I, 1, 4, p. 35.14; translation Wickham, *Selected Letters*, 63.

<sup>129</sup> Emperor Theodosius ordered the arrest of Memnon of Ephesus, Cyril and Nestorius after the Council of Ephesus and set up a theological commission composed of seven bishops from the Alexandrian school and seven from their Antiochene counter-parts to resolve the issue. Theodoret served as the chief for the Antiochene side while Acacius of Melitene represented the Alexandrians (Cf. ACO I, 1, 3, p.67.1). For the names of the representative bishops, Cf. ACO I, 1, 7, p.77.39-40 and p. 72. 4-5.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Du Manoir H. *Dogme et Spiritualité de S. Cyrille d'Alexandrie* (Paris: 1944), 129.

<sup>131</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 216.

If the hypostatic union is but one of the metaphors Cyril used to explain his single subject theology, the *mia physis* formula is another. Cyril adopted ‘one incarnate nature of God the Word’ (*Mia physis Tou Theou Logou Sesarkōmenē or Sesarkōmenou*) as an Athanasian formula without realising that Apollinarius of Laodicea was the originator, who included the phrase in the article of faith he sent to Emperor Jovian in 363.<sup>132</sup> Cyril first used the catchphrase in his *The Five Tomes against Nestorius*<sup>133</sup> and later on in his Letters to Eulogius (*Ep.44*)<sup>134</sup> and Succensus (*Ep. 45*)<sup>135</sup>. Apollinarius’s dilemma was twofold. He affirms, of course, with the Arians and Macedonians, that the eternal Word is the sole subject of the incarnation. Unlike them, however, he was a believer in the deity of Christ. For the Arians and the Macedonians, if Jesus of Nazareth and the eternal Word of God are synonymous (which they affirm), and if the Word itself suffered and died (which again they affirm), then they argue that it is a logical absurdity to maintain the deity of Christ, for God in his very nature is not capable of suffering or dying. Apollinarius’s solution to this fourth-century Christological crisis was to show how Christ can be one against the two sons heresy and is still fully God contra the Arians and the Macedonians.<sup>136</sup> He attempted to do this through his controversial slogan *mia physis tou theou logou sesarkōmenē*. By that Apollinarius meant Christ is one nature because the eternal Logos united himself with a human body alone rather than with full human nature, for the Logos had no need of a

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<sup>132</sup> For the Apollinarian origin of the phrase, Cf. Apollinarius, *Ad Jovinianum*, I; H. Litzemann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule* (Tübingen: Verlag, 1904), 251. After the condemnation of Apollinarius his works were ordered to be burnt. His followers preserved some of his writings by assigning them Athanasian pseudo-authorship. Apollinarius was bishop of Laodicea, one of the Syrian cities along with Apamea, Antioch and Seleucia, the Church of Antioch had been through a long and bitter struggle with Apollinarianism and had become very sensitive to its smell. Alexandrians, on the other hand, were less affected by Apollinarianism. Cf. Grillmeier, *Christ*, 416; Russel, *Cyril*, 217, n. 42.

<sup>133</sup> Cyril wrote *The Five Tomes against Nestorius* (henceforth ‘*Tomes*’) in the spring of 430 in response to Nestorius’s sermons on *Theotokos* about a year ago. The *Tomes* were preceded by his Paschal Letter 17 of 429 to the monks (cf. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 77, 768-798), *Letter to the Monks*, a Pastoral letter to the same recipients (Cf. ACO I, 1, 1, p.10-23) whereby Cyril expressed his amazement by the obstinacy of Nestorius to deny the *Theotokos*, and by the First and Second Letters of Cyril to Nestorius (cf. ACO I 1.1, 1, p.23.26-p.24.6 & ACO I, 1, 1, p.25-28; Wickham, *Select Letters*, 2-10 respectively for the First and Second Letters). The significance of the *Tomes* is that they are elaborate explanation of the theology summarised in the dogmatic letters of Cyril, cf. Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 130).

<sup>134</sup> For Cyril’s Letter to Eulogius, cf. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 349-351.

<sup>135</sup> For Cyril’s First Letter to Succensus, cf. Wickham, *Select Letters*, 70-83.

<sup>136</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 178-179.

human soul. The relationship of the Word to the human body assumed by him is not a simple addition according to the Apollinarian scheme. Rather it was a natural union whereby the flesh and the Word, together, resulted in a *mia physis*, the latter playing the role of governing<sup>137</sup> principle in lieu of the human soul. He asserted that the human soul was made redundant by the enfleshment of the Logos because his platonic anthropology postulates that a human soul (*Nous*) is not just a vital part of a human being but the person himself.<sup>138</sup> His proposal, however, created more problems than it helped to solve because he ended up compromising the full humanity of Jesus in order to protect the divinity. If the Arians deny the full divinity of Jesus in order to make him one Christ, then Apollinarius went too far to the other extreme: he was condemned<sup>139</sup> for denying the full humanity of Jesus in order to confess Christ is one.<sup>140</sup>

His controversial *mia physis* formula has, indeed, been the subject of much suspicion, scrutiny and, in some cases, misinterpretation by successive councils.<sup>141</sup> What Cyril's critics failed to see, however, was that despite the heretical origin and usage of the *mia physis* formula, Cyril's re-interpretation of the phrase was totally in line with orthodoxy.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> *hgemonikovn*.

<sup>138</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 182.

<sup>139</sup> Apollinarius was condemned four times between AD 377 and 381 by three local synods (Rome 377; Alexandria 378; Antioch 379 and finally by the Second Oecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381.

<sup>140</sup> T. G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 34, n.14. For further discussion on the Arian and Apollinarian heresies and their context, cf. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, Ch. 4-6 and 9-12; J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine I: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University Press, 1971). 4-5; B. Studier, *Trinity and Incarnation* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993); Grillmeier, *Christ, Vol. 1*.

<sup>141</sup> For a very helpful historical discussion of the reactions of the Council of Ephesus, the Formula of Reunion of 433 and the Council of Chalcedon regarding the *mia physis* formula, Cf. John S. Romandies, 'St. Cyril's "One Physis or Hypostasis of God Logos the Incarnate" and Chalcedon' in Paul R. Fries and Tiran Nersoyan (eds.), *Christ in East and West* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), pp. 15-34. Also by the same author is 'Highlights in the debate over Theodore of Mopsuestia's Christology', *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 5:2 (1959-60), 157-61.

<sup>142</sup> After the patriarch's death, however, the *mia physis* formula was interpreted in an unorthodox way by some extreme Cyrillians who held the view that Christ is consubstantial with God according to the Nicene creed but he is not consubstantial with us, human beings, for the Creed did not affirm it explicitly. The hard-liners do not allow for doctrinal development after Nicaea and reject any kind of concession for the sake of the Antiochenes unlike Cyril. Cf. John Meyendorff, *Imperial unity and Christian divisions : the Church, 450-680 AD* (Crestwood, N.Y. : St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 52. Chief among them was the highly venerated archimandrite Eutyches (he was given the

Cyril succeeded where Apollinarius had failed. To appreciate what Cyril intended to communicate by this formula, it is instrumental to analyse separately what he meant by *mia physis* first of all and then consider the remainder of the formula (*Tou Theou Logou Sesarkōmenē* or *Sesarkōmenou*).

Coming to the first part of the formula (*mia physis*, that is), *physis* can mean either a ‘concrete reality’ or ‘defining natural qualities’. Of course, the former was archaic while the latter meaning was Aristotlean usage, which was comparatively modern, at that time. Cyril of Alexandria understood *physis* in the sense of ‘concrete reality’ and his Antiochene challengers were used to the second sense of ‘defining natural qualities’. The Antiochenes’ perception of *mia physis* is none other than a *tertium quid*: a divine-human hybrid that is neither fully God nor fully man because according to Cyril Jesus is one out of two (*ek duo*) natures united in a manner similar to that of body and soul.<sup>143</sup> Nestorius was no exception.

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epithet ‘bishop of bishops’) who understood the *mia physis*, and other Alexandrian formulae such as ‘one nature from two’, literally to mean two natures before the union but only one after that (Cf. ACO. II, i, 143: 527). Cyril, nevertheless, had explicitly warned against such extremity even though he knew of no one who did that in his lifetime (Cf. ACO I, 1, 6, pp. 90.7). The Home Synod (*synodos endēmousa*), a council comprising Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople and the bishops who happened to be in the capital at the time, tried him for confusing and mixing the natures of Christ (Cf. ACO. II, i, 144: 546) and he was subsequently excommunicated as ‘the follower of Valentinius and Apollinarius!’ (cf. ACO. II, i, 145: 551). Most scholars, however, agree that it was Eutyches himself who was confused rather than being guilty of confusing the natures (cf. Samuel, *Chalcedon*, 43). Eutyches did not accept the decision of the *synodos endēmousa* but pleaded for the support of the monastic community as well as imperial and ecclesiastical authorities. Pope Leo of Rome ignored his petition but Eutyches was successful in securing the most crucial support of the emperor through his powerful godson Chrysaphius the chamberlain, who replaced Pulcheria as the emperor’s adviser, and that of Dioscorus of Alexandria, Cyril’s successor, who was seeking for an excuse to attack Theodoret of Cyrrhus. A general council that was summoned by the emperor, to be held at Ephesus in August 449, with the presidency of Dioscorus, condemned Flavian as well as Eutyches’s accuser Eusebius of Dorylaeum (Cf. Samuel, *Chalcedon*, 24-33; Sellers, *Chalcedon*, 66). Pope Leo the Great, whose Tome was denied a reading at the council, described the Council as ‘a den of thieves’ or ‘Robber synod’ (*Non concilium sed latrocinium*). The achievements of the *latrocinium*, as it came to be known afterwards, however, were short-lived. Theodosius was killed in an accident falling from his horse in July 450, without a male heir. Pulcheria, therefore, reserving her virginity, was ceremonially married to Marcian, a general, who subsequently was crowned Emperor to succeed Theodosius. The death of Theodosius gave her a second chance to make a comeback from the political wilderness her late brother subjected her to. Chrysaphius was executed and the bishops condemned by the *latrocinium* were called back from exile and Flavian’s body was restored to the Basilica of the Apostles with due honour. Eutyches, who was exonerated by the same synod, was banished to Doliche (northern Syria) and Dioscorus was exiled to Gangra in Paphlagonia.

<sup>143</sup> Thomas G. Weinandy, ‘Cyril of Alexandria and the Mystery of the Incarnation’ in Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating (eds.), *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation*, (London and New York: Continuum and T&T Clark, 2003), 34.

His reaction to Cyril's *mia physis* can be deduced from his criticism of the Arians in his book *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, a personal reflection on the tragedies of his life shortly before his death in c. 450 after twenty years of exile and an untold misery which he bore with full dignity and fortitude.<sup>144</sup>

They [the Arians] confuse his divine and human [qualities], attributing his incarnation not to [his own] authority, but to an overruling command, saying that the union with flesh resulted in one nature [*mia physis*] ... even as the soul and the body are bound together in one nature in the body, suffering of necessity, whether he will or not, the sufferings of the nature which he took upon himself, as though he was not the nature of the father impassible and without needs ... . He hungered and thirsted and grew weary, feared and fled and died; in short they say that he naturally endured whatever appertained to the sensible nature, which he assumed.<sup>145</sup>

This objection of the Antiochenes to Cyril's *mia physis* has been echoed by Succensus's question to the patriarch: 'If there is one incarnate nature of the Word, there must have been a sort of merger and mixture, with the human nature in him being diminished by its removal.'<sup>146</sup>

That is not, however, what Cyril had in mind when he talked about *mia physis*. He used *mia physis* in the sense of 'entity' rather than 'quiddity' in order to establish that the Word is the sole subject of the incarnation.<sup>147</sup> Cyril's reply, both to Succensus, with his eyes on the Antiochene sympathisers at large, was:

Again they twist the facts, failing to recognise that the reality is one incarnate nature of the Word. If the Word who was begotten mysteriously of God the Father and who afterwards issued as man from woman by assumption of flesh (not lifeless flesh but flesh endowed with life and reason) is truly and actually one Son, he cannot be divided into two persons or sons but remains one, though discarnate or incorporeal but possessing his very own body in

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<sup>144</sup> The Nestorius of the *Bazaar of Heracleides*, perhaps, is a more matured person than he was 20 years ago when clashed with Cyril of Alexandria. The basic tenets of his position, however, remained more or less the same. *Bazaar of Heracleides* (also known as *Liber Heracleides*) was a mistranslation of the Syriac title for Nestorius's *Apologia* by J. F. Bethune-Baker. The Greek original was lost and the Syriac copy was destroyed during the First World War. An American Presbyterian missionary at Lake Urmia in Iran made a copy in 1888 and another missionary from the Anglican Church made a copy from the American version in 1898. These two copies are still extant. Professor J. F. Bethune-Baker introduced the Book to the western world in 1908. P. Bedjan and F. Nau edited the Syriac version and translated it into French in 1910. Cf. Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 223, n.159; Grillmeier, *Christ*, 559-168).

<sup>145</sup> Nestorius, *Bazaar of Heracleides*, 8-9.

<sup>146</sup> For Cyril's Second Letter to Succensus, cf. Wickham, *Select Letters*, 85-93, citing p.87.

<sup>147</sup> Weinandy, 'Cyril of Alexandria and the Mystery of the Incarnation', 34; T. G. Weinandy, *Does God Change? The Word's Becoming in the Incarnation* (Petersham: St. Bede's, 1985), 46-58.

inseparable union. To say this could not possibly mean or entail mingling, merger or anything of that kind, how could it? If we say the Only-begotten Son of God became incarnate and made man 'one', that does not mean he has been mingled as they suppose; the Word's nature has not transformed to the nature of the flesh or that of the flesh to that of the Word – no, while each element was seen to persist in its particular natural character for the reason just given, mysteriously and inexpressibly unified he displayed to us one nature (but as I said, *incarnate* nature) of the Son.

Weinandy argues the clue to Cyril's meaning is to be found in Cyril's consistent inclusion of the body-soul relationship every time he talks about Christ being a *mia physis*.<sup>148</sup> The above response to Succensus's question was, characteristically, followed by a body-soul metaphor.<sup>149</sup>

'One' is a term applied properly not only to the basic single elements but to such composite entities as man compounded of soul and body. Soul and body are different kinds of thing and are not mutually consubstantial; yet united they constitute man's single nature despite the fact that the difference in nature of the elements brought into unity is present in the composite condition.<sup>150</sup>

To be sure, Cyril was not the first to use the metaphor.<sup>151</sup> When the Patristic writers before him used the soul-body relationship, nonetheless, they did so in two ways both as an analogy of and, in a more problematic way, as an exact model for the incarnation. Cyril was an exception in that, being well aware of the limitations of human language to adequately express the mystery of the incarnation and the theological flaw inherent in the second option, he was very careful, almost always,<sup>152</sup> to stick to the first sense alone. Employed in the former sense, the body-soul relationship serves as a legitimate pedagogical<sup>153</sup> tool whereby just as body and soul are essentially different parts that come together in order to

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. T. G. Weinandy, 'The Soul/Body Analogy in the Incarnation: Cyril of Alexandria.' *Coptic Church Review* 17 (1996), pp. 59-66.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. *Contra Nestorius* 2, Proema, Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 142; *Ad. Succensus*. I, 7 (Wickham, *Select Letters*, 77); *Ad. Succensus*. 2, 5 (Wickham, *Select Letters*, 93); *Exp.* 12, cap.2 (Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 179-180).

<sup>150</sup> Cf. *ACO* I, 1,6, pp. 159.11-160.7; trans. Wickham, *Select Letters*, 89.

<sup>151</sup> Patristic authors, east and west, ranging from Origen to Tertullian, have used body/soul analogy in relation to the incarnation before Cyril did. Cf. U. Lang, *Studies in the Christology of John Philoponus and its Place in the Controversies over Chalcedon* (Oxford: PhD Dissertation, 1999), Chapter 6; Grillmeier, *Christ*, Vol. 1, 129-131.

<sup>152</sup> Weinandy identifies one instance where Cyril used the body/soul relationship as a manner of the incarnation instead of his usual way of analogy. Cf. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 194, n. 43.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie : l'humanité, le salut et la question monophysite* (Paris : Beauchense, 1997), 235 ;

form a single person, an individual, in the same way humanity and divinity, although constitutionally different, are united in Christ who is a single entity. Unlike Nestorius and his Antiochene colleagues, for Cyril soul and body are not incomplete natures in and of themselves. Many scholars recognise the importance Cyril attached to the soul-body relationship with regard to the incarnation. McGuckin, for example, describes it as ‘Cyril’s most recurring image’<sup>154</sup> and argues that the purpose of the analogy is to show that the integrity of both natures, human and divine, is not compromised because of the union, just like the soul and the body remain distinct but united to create an individual.<sup>155</sup> Norris, however, was criticised for his critical and yet wrong view of Cyril’s usage of the body-soul image as a compositional model that resulted in the confusion of natures.<sup>156</sup> Other scholars, in addition to seeing the validity of McGuckin’s observation, go further than that, emphasising that Cyril used the image in a purely analogical sense with the primary purpose of demonstrating that Christ is one.<sup>157</sup> Using the soul-body as a model for the incarnation succeeds in maintaining the singleness of the subject (just like the individual human being made up of soul and body is one) but destroys the integrity of the natures by creating a *tertium quid*, in the process.<sup>158</sup> Weinandy is quite outspoken in his criticism of this aspect of patristic Christology:

... within the patristic Christology the soul-body relationship and union became, almost universally (Cyril being the exception ...), the normative model for conceiving and articulating the incarnation. This is the most lamentable, unfortunate and misconceived intellectual stratagem in the entire history of christology. It not only caused all the

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Scholia 9; Letter to the Monks, para.12; First Letter to Succensus; Explanation of the Twelve Chapters (Explanation 3) and many more.

<sup>155</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 198-199; also translated from the Greek with introduction by the same author, *St. Cyril of Alexandria: On the Unity of Christ*, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000), 38, 40; also Chadwick, ‘Eucharist and Christology’, pp. 159-162; Steven A. McKinion, *Words, Imagery, and the Mystery of Christ: A reconstruction of Cyril of Alexandria’s Christology* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000), 173.

<sup>156</sup> For Norris’s position, cf. R. A. Norris, ‘Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria’, *Studia Patristica*, Vol.13, pp. 261-267 and also by the same author, ‘Toward the Contemporary Interpretation of the Chalcedonian Definition’, in *Lux in Lumine*, p.68. Contra Norris, Cf. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 195, n.43.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille*, 243-253; Frances M. Young, ‘A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, (1971), 22 : pp 103-114, citing p.106; Graham Goulde, ‘Cyril of Alexandria and the Formula of Reunion’, *Downside Review* 106 (1988), pp. 238-243; Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 195; also by the same author, ‘Mystery’, 37.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Weinandy, ‘Cyril of Alexandria and the Mystery of the Incarnation’, 34, n. 28. Also by the same author, *Does God Suffer?* 184.



christological misconceptions and heresies within the patristic period but it lies at the root of much consequent and contemporary christological error.<sup>159</sup>

Paul of Samosata's condemnation by the Council of Antioch (AD 268) illustrates Weinandy's critique of the Fathers for muddled thinking on the body-soul relationship image with regard to the incarnation.<sup>160</sup> Paul of Samosata, who chose to deny the divinity of the Logos rather than accepting the use of the image as a model for the incarnation, was condemned for arriving at the wrong conclusion with valid reasoning. On the contrary, and the council that condemned him upheld the right conclusion, the divinity of the Logos, which they arrived at for the wrong reasons.

This brings us to the remainder of the formula, *tou theou Logou sesarkōmenē*. If the first part of the formula, *mia physis*, is about singleness of subject or entity, the second part deals with the identity of that subject (*tou theou Logou*) and his mode of existence as a human being (*sesarkōmenē*).<sup>161</sup> The formula, nevertheless, has a variant reading *tou theou Logou sesarkōmenou*. Both of them had an Apollinarian origin and are used by Cyril but the first of the two is more common. Grammatically speaking, in the first and more prevalent form, *sesarkōmenē* qualifies the *mia physis*, whence it will be translated as 'the one incarnate nature of God the Word'. *Sesarkōmenou*, on the other hand, modifies the personal subject *tou theou logou*. The formula, therefore, translates as 'the one nature of God the incarnate Word'. The first formula talks about the incarnate nature of the Word that is one while the second deals with the one nature of the incarnate Word.

How about the theology behind the formula? Do these two variant readings of the *mia physis* have a theological significance, if at all, or are they another way of saying exactly the same thing? McGuckin thinks 'It made a world of difference'.<sup>162</sup> For Cyril *physis*, albeit archaic, meant a 'concrete reality'. Hence *mia physis* connotes a single concrete reality. When the adjective *Sesarkōmenē* is added to modify *mia physis*, it signifies that the single concrete reality (which is none other than the Word of God himself according to the remainder of the formula) is enfleshed. By the very construction of the sentence, therefore, Cyril was able to make his point: the Word of God is the single subject of the incarnation.

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<sup>159</sup> Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 183.

<sup>160</sup> Lang, *Studies in the Christology of John Philoponus*, ch. 6.

<sup>161</sup> Weinandy, 'Cyril of Alexandria and the Mystery of the Incarnation', 38.

<sup>162</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 208.

But not everyone agrees with McGuckin. Weinandy, for instance, argues that given the Cyrillian understanding of *mia physis*, as singleness of entity rather than quiddity, and the accompanying image of body-soul relationship, once again after Cyril, as an analogy, not as a model for the union following the pre-Cyrillian patristic thinkers, both renderings affirm single subject Christology. The difference, however, is while the second form (*sesarkōmenou*) more directly affirms the singleness of subject in that the one nature is that of the incarnate Word (or the Word of God who was enfleshed), the more prevalent reading (*Sesarkōmenē*) is closer to what Cyril had in mind and to later Christological developments.

When all is said and done, Cyril was a very controversial figure. A Profound theologian whose writings ‘have a canonical and contemporary relevance of no small proportions’,<sup>163</sup> he was yet a man who was deeply hated by many even in his own time and who has been loudly criticised by modern scholars because of his excessive political manoeuvres and indirect involvement in the assassination of the popular philosopher Hypatia. Nothing portrays better the power of the man and the intensity of the hatred his enemies had for him than a letter attributed to Theodoret of Cyrrhus on the occasion of the patriarch’s death:

At last and with a final struggle the villain has gone. The good and the gentle pass away all too soon; the bad prolong their lives for years ... . Knowing that the fellow’s malice has been growing daily and doing harm to the body of the church, the Lord has lopped him off like a plague and taken away the reproach from Israel. His survivors are indeed delighted at his departure. The dead, maybe, are sorry. There is some ground for alarm lest they should be so much annoyed at his company as to send him back to us ... . Great care must then be taken. It is especially your Holiness’ business to undertake this duty: to tell the guild of undertakers to lay a very big and heavy stone upon his grave, for fear that he should come back again and show his fickle mind once more. Let him take his new doctrines to the shades below and preach to them all day and all night. ... I really am sorry for the poor fellow!<sup>164</sup>

Both the Chalcedonians and their non-Chalcedonian opponents alike have revered him, on the other hand, as one of the greatest saints of all times: a status only a handful of people managed to achieve. To mention a couple of his admirers, Athanasius of Sinaii in the seventh century called him ‘the seal of the Fathers’, while Pope Leo XIII in the nineteenth

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<sup>163</sup> Cf. McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria*, 2.

<sup>164</sup> G. L. Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics*, 150.

### **He was anointed because He was Incarnated**

century declared him a doctor of the Church. Furthermore, the Eastern Churches are proud to hold him as their teacher *par excellence* and define their theology after his name; i.e. Cyrillian. Ethiopia is no exception.<sup>165</sup> A. N. S. Lane put the story of Cyril in perspective when he said:

It is not necessary to portray Cyril as pure light or pure darkness. One can recognise his great achievement in maintaining the doctrine of the incarnation, while recognizing that it was not a totally unpleasant duty for him to unseat the bishop of Constantinople.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Ezra, Gebremedhin. *Life-Giving Blessing: An Inquiry into the Eucharistic Doctrine of Cyril of Alexandria* (Uppsala: University Press, 1977).

<sup>166</sup> A. N. S. Lane, *The Lion Concise Book of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1996), 49.

## CHAPTER 2

### CYRILLO-ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY CHALLENGED: THE INDIGENOUS AND THE FOREIGN

#### *2.1. The Troops and the People*

Portuguese fascination with Ethiopia began when a certain Dominican monk, Friar Jordanus, linked the Emperor of the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia with the priestly king of the most popular legend of Prester John of the Indies in the 14th Century.<sup>1</sup> The legend about the existence of a powerful priestly king, identified as Prester John, beyond the lands of Armenia and Persia began to circulate in medieval Europe around 1145. His exact whereabouts, however, were not known for certain. The legend inspired several explorations, including the accidental discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, with the view of forging commercial, political and military alliance with his Christian empire. Prior to Jordanus' attribution of Prester John to Ethiopia, the priest-king was believed to be the leader of the Thomasian Christians of India, or of the Nestorian Christians of Central Asia.<sup>2</sup> Pedro de Covilhã led the first, and probably the only, successful voyage to Ethiopia in 1494, towards the end of the reign of Emperor Eskindir (1478-1494), after several failed expeditions before him with more failures to follow. Girma and Merid have given us an excellent account of the Portuguese efforts to reach Ethiopia and the very high price they paid.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Girma Beshah and Merid Wolde Aregay, *The Question of the Union of the Churches in Luso-Ethiopian Relations (1500-1632)* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar and Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1964), 33. Henceforth, 'Girma & Merid, *Luso-Ethiopian Relations*'.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Girma & Merid, *Luso-Ethiopian Relations*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Girma & Merid, *Luso-Ethiopian Relations*, 15-20.

Ethiopian interest in Portugal, nevertheless, became noticeable from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. There were three facets to this relationship; diplomatic (1520–1526), military (1541–1543) and religious (1557–1632).

In 1520 a Portuguese diplomatic mission, with economic as well religious motives, was sent to Ethiopia to establish friendship with the Emperor of the Abyssinians, believed at that time to be the Prester John. Commercially, Turkey's dominance of the lucrative trade routes of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean was regarded detrimental to Portugal's trading empire in the East, just as it was a matter of great concern to Europeans at large. Religiously, this coincided with the founding of the Jesuits by Ignatius of Loyola with the expressed goal of halting Islamic takeover of the Christian world through intensive missionary activity. After a stay of six years the embassy returned to Portugal.

The Portuguese diplomatic mission to Ethiopia in 1520 paved the way for subsequent military and eventual religious contacts. Powerless to withstand the Muslims onslaught led by Ahmäd ibn Ibrahim, also known as *Grañ Ahmäd* (meaning Ahmad the left-handed) and faced with the possible extermination of Orthodox Christianity from Ethiopia, never mind his own dynasty, Emperor Libinä Dīngil (1508-1540) were left with no option other than to plead for a very urgent military assistance from the Catholic Portugal in the name of Christian solidarity. Fortunately, Libinä Dīngil's request was granted but unfortunately he did not live to see it. Indubitably, four hundred Portuguese troops led by Dom Cristovão da Gama eventually arrived in Ethiopia. By then Gälawdewos (1541-1559) had been made emperor succeeding his beleaguered late father. Soon after their jubilant reception in Ankobär<sup>4</sup>, the Portuguese were subjected to fierce attacks on several fronts by the troops of Grañ, who were sent to intercept the joining of the Portuguese troops with those of Emperor Gälawdewos, who was fortified in the north at time of their arrival.<sup>5</sup> Victory swung both

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<sup>4</sup> Ankobär is a small town located in central Ethiopia in Northern Shoa. It is 42 kilo meters from the city of Däbrä Bīrhan.

<sup>5</sup> For the detailed discussions of the time and wars of Ahmäd Grañ from the perspectives of Ethiopian writers, see Täklä S'adiq Mäkuriya, *Yä-Grañ Ahmäd Wārära* (Addis Ababa: Bīrhaninna Sälam, 1974), Chapters 3, 4 and 5. For a brief but very helpful narration of the wars of Ahmäd Grañ by the same author see, *Yä-It'op'ya Tarik: Kä-äs'e Libnä Dīngil iskä As'e Tewodros* (Addis Ababa: Bīrhaninna Sälam, 1969), 40-64.

ways, nevertheless, in one of those ferocious confrontations, the battle of Ashänge, that is, da Gama himself was captured injured and was ruthlessly beheaded by his captors.

Täklä S'adiq Mäkuriya's depiction of da Gama (and of the Portuguese soldiers by implication) as a panic-stricken young man tied back against a tree in front of a ruthless Arab-looking middle-aged man with a moustache; covering his head with a turban and holding a sharp knife sword ready to beheading his captive could, more or less, be taken as the present day Ethiopians' perception of Grañ's look.<sup>6</sup> The picture magnifies Ahmäd Grañ, in a manner similar to that of the Ethiopian folklore about him, but says very little, if any, concerning the Portuguese gallantry and commitment.<sup>7</sup> The sacrifice made by the Portuguese troops in defending the Christian faith had not been given its due recognition, probably, because of memories of the bloodshed that followed Emperor Susniyos's radical and forceful imposition of Catholicism in 1622 abandoning the gradual and gentle approach of Pedro Paez. Abba Täklä Mariam's argument, albeit extreme and unfounded, even questions the presence of Portuguese troops in Ethiopia altogether. He claims that Portuguese missionaries (i.e. the Jesuits) were sent to Ethiopia to convert the people to Catholicism rather than troops being sent to defend the country from the Islamic invaders.<sup>8</sup>

In any case, the war was concluded with the victory of the Christian coalition when Ahmäd Grañ was targeted and killed by da Gama's servant who was determined to avenge his master's blood. Even though the biggest threat to the Christian Empire in Ethiopia was removed with the death of Grañ, war between Christian highlanders and the Muslim lowlanders (the walled town of Harrär being their religious and political capital) continued

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<sup>6</sup>Täklä S'adiq, *Yä-İtyop'ya Tarik*, 66.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Girma Fisseha, 'Ahmad Grañ and the Portuguese in Ethiopian Folk Painting' in Manuel João Ramos with Isabel Boavida (eds.), *The indigenous and the Foreign in Christian Ethiopian Art: On Portuguese-Ethiopian Contacts in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 113-118.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. M. Taklamariam, *Yä-İtyop'p'ya Betä KIRSTYAN Sİ'İLÄ KIRSTOS and Akal and Bahriy inddä honä Yämtamnäw Haymanot* (Addis Ababa:, 1960), 51.

during the reigns of the successive emperors. Emperor Gälawdewos himself was killed by Nur Ahmäd who succeeded Ahmad Grañ after marrying his widow pledging to avenge Grañ's blood.

The Portuguese intervention to save Ethiopia from the seemingly inevitable subjugation by Muslims had, at least initially, paid a dividend in terms of Ethiopia's growing relationship with the Roman See. Ethio-Roman relations continued to flourish in the aftermath of the Grañ's death culminating in the arrival of the first Jesuit missionaries in Ethiopia toward the end of the reign of Gälawdewos in 1557 with the expressed mission of the reunification of the Ethiopian Church with the Roman Catholic Church. Whether or not the Ethiopian leaders had explicitly pledged to proclaim Catholicism a state religion as a condition for securing the desperately needed military assistance remains debatable. But in the minds of millions of die-hard Orthodox Ethiopians, as the Papal fanatics were soon to find out, conversion from Orthodoxy to Catholicism was not a simple matter of changing denominational affiliation or allegiance from Alexandria to Rome. It was a life-and-death issue seen as changing the true religion (*Ri'itu Haymanot*) for the 'false' one.

## ***2.2. The Priests and the Missionaries***

The Jesuits came to Ethiopia in the wake of the Portuguese expedition to save the crumbling ancient Christian kingdom from falling prey to the Islamic invasion led by Grañ. The role and influence of the Jesuits in the political sphere had been marginal at first. The war with Ahmäd ibn Ibrahim (Grañ Ahmäd) and the subsequent Oromo migration resulted in the weakening of the central state and the formation of powerful nobilities after the death of Emperor Gälawdewos (1540-1559). The monarchy saw further erosion during the reigns of Minas (1559-1563) and Särs'ä Dīngil (1563-1596). Consequently, successive emperors, Yaqob (1596-1603; 1604-1607) and Zä-Dīngil (1603-04), increasingly turned to the Jesuits

seeking weaponry to subdue their opponents, this time, the Christian warlords rather than the Muslims.<sup>9</sup>

Theologically, at least from the perspective of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the coming of the Jesuits meant, first and foremost, a first-hand encounter with Latin Christology. There are other undeniable theological and ecclesiastical differences between Ethiopia and Rome such as Papal supremacy and the *filioque*. It was their differing christological traditions that were regarded as the most important issue. Encompassment by the Muslim nations and the resultant seclusion of this ancient Christian land from the rest of the world made the influx of Christian missionaries an almost impossible operation. Since other missionaries from the non-Chalcedonian side had already been well-established in Ethiopia from fifth century on, the Muslim dominance of the Horn of Africa was especially hostile to the Chalcedonians who, of late, had desperately been trying to set foot in Ethiopia but never succeeded until the Jesuits finally made a breakthrough in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, albeit at a very high price.<sup>10</sup> Even before the arrival of the Jesuits, however, as is manifest from manuscripts and doctrinal manuals, Ethiopian scholars had a fairly accurate knowledge the history of doctrine in general and of the first five formative centuries of Christianity in particular. But their knowledge was not based on a scrupulous examination of the proceedings of these councils in their original languages in which they were written. Neither was it gained by engaging the main exponents in a theological dialogue nor by attending Ecumenical Councils, where the orthodoxy of the holders of the different views would be (fairly or unfairly) evaluated and judged. This was because until 1955 Ethiopians were prohibited from either appointing a patriarch from among their own ranks or sending delegates to ecumenical councils. Their understanding was rather derived from the conscientious studies of the translations of the proceedings into Ge'ez as well as through

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<sup>9</sup> For an excellent study of the political history of this period, see Merid, *Southern Ethiopia*, Chs. 3, 4 and 6. Also M. Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes. The Challenge of Islam and the Re-unification of the Christian Empire 1769-1855* (London: Longmans, 1968).

<sup>10</sup> For Portuguese efforts to reach Ethiopian and the very high price their missionaries paid to make this happen, cf. Girma Beshah and Merid Wolde Aregay, *Luso-Ethiopian Relations*, 15-20.



their reading of polemical works written by non-Chalcedonian authors (especially that of the Nine Saints as well as other monks) and, not least, through candid discussions with some Europeans, not necessarily well versed in theology, but who had managed to enter the country and gained access to the imperial courts. Francisco Alvares, the chaplain of the Portuguese embassy to Lībinä Dīngil's Ethiopia, led by Dom Rodrigo de Lima as its ambassador in 1515, for example, had indicated that he had several opportunities to explain the doctrinal differences of the Roman Catholic Church with that of the Ethiopian Church to the emperor. Alvares was specific about the questions the emperor asked him about the lives of certain saints and papal infallibility. But no specific reference to Christology was made. As one of the major areas of differences between Ethiopia and Rome, however, it should not be unsafe to assume that Christology could have been among the various subjects discussed between the emperor and the chaplain.<sup>11</sup> This should not call into question, however, the accuracy of the knowledge of the Ethiopian theologians and the independence of their judgment. It was not out of a blind loyalty to Church Alexandria, as Abba Ayele (Mario da Ibiy-Addi) tried to argue<sup>12</sup> or out of indebtedness to Frumentius- and hence the Syrian Church- that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church did not recognise the Fourth Council as ecumenical. The primary reason for the Ethiopians refusal to accept the

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Francisco Alvares, *The Prester John of the Indies: A True Relation of the Lands of the Prester John being the narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia in 1520*. Volume 1. Translated by Lord Stanley of Alderley. Revised and Edited with additional material by C. F. Beckingham and G. W. B. Huntingford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 308. Henceforth, 'Alvarez, *Prester John*'. See, furthermore, Girma and Merid, *Luso-Ethiopian Relations*, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Abba Ayele however, contests that the Ethiopian Church's rejection of the Chalcedonian Definition of Faith as well as separation from Rome was not on doctrinal ground as it was for the anti-Roman propaganda and intrigues of the Alexandrians who dominated the Ethiopian Church. Cf. Ayele Täklä Haymanot, *Ya-ityop'ya Betä Kīrstyan Sī'īlā Kīrstos Bahrīyat Akalawī Tāwahdo Yāmtamnāw Tīmhirt* (Asmara: P'et'ros Sila Press, 1960), 35-43. The theologians of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, however, have vehemently opposed to the assertion. Five books were written by Ethiopian scholars in opposition to Adele's book. Cf. Admasu Jānbäre (Māli'akā Bīrhan), *Mādlotä Amin: Yä-haymanot Mizan* (Addis Ababa: Tinsa'e Zä-guba'e, 1962); Abba Täklä Mariam, *Yä-Itiop'ya Betä Kīrstyan Kīrstos And Akal And Bahrīy indāhonā Yāmtamnāw Haymanot* (Addis Ababa: Tinsa'e Zāguba'e, 1960); Māmhir Kidanā Mariam,

Chalcedonian Definition of Faith, like other sister Oriental Churches, was because they believed they had sufficient grounds that its terminology and formula contradict that country's great Cyrillo-Alexandrian theological tradition.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the arrival of the Portuguese missionaries<sup>14</sup>, and especially up to the time of Emperor Susnīyos (1607-32)<sup>15</sup>, the first and the last Ethiopian emperor to officially embrace Catholicism through the missionary efforts of the Jesuits, the theologians of the Ethiopian Church (*Liqawint*) seem to be contented in their mastery of

Cyrillian Christology and its catch phrase 'One incarnate nature of God the Word' (*Ahati t'āba'iy'i zā-Īgzi'abher Qal zatāsāb'a*). There was also an agreement that Jesus is the anointed one (*Kristos bihil qibu bihil*), and was no suggestion of any disagreement over the *raison d'être* of his anointment by the Holy Spirit: in the words of the *Qerellos*, 'He was anointed because he was incarnated' (*zatāsāb'i'a tāqāb'i'a*).<sup>16</sup>

The Ethiopian Church has been through bitter theological controversies in the past. Controversial issues that divided the Church include, among others, the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, which is Saturday, by Christians in addition to Sunday (the Lord's Day or the Christian Sabbath)<sup>17</sup> and the place of the Virgin Mary in the worship and life of the

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<sup>13</sup> Roger W. Cowley, 'The Ethiopian Church and the Council of Chalcedon', *Sobornost*, vol. 6 No. 1 (Summer 1970), 33-38.

<sup>14</sup> Getatchew Haile, *The Faith of the Unctionists*, VIII.

<sup>15</sup> For the detailed discussion of the genuineness and the circumstances surrounding the conversion of Emperor Susnīyos, Cf. Girma & Merid, *Luso-Ethiopian Relations*, 79-88.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Weischer, *Qerellos III*, p.76, 1.

<sup>17</sup> At the beginning, the Ewostatean controversy was about the observation of the Sabbath besides Sunday. Abba Ewosatewos (died 1333), founder of the Monastery of Däbrä Wärq in Gojjam, taught and defended the pro-Sabbath position while Abba Täklä Haymanot (died 1312), the founder of the Monastery of Däbrä Libanos in Shoa held an anti-Sabbath stance. The Alexandrian See rendered her support to Täklä Haymanot and Abba Ewosatewos, in protest against the decision, abandon his monastery and the country and died in exile. His followers, however, organised the community into

Christian community, i.e. Mariology.<sup>18</sup> Even though Mariology and Christology are intrinsically linked<sup>19</sup>, the disagreement over Mary did not trigger a Christological crisis in

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a vibrant movement despite the persecutions they had to endure. Later during the reign of Emperor Dawit, the followers of Ewosatewos were restored to favour. The disagreement between the two schools widened from Sabbath to Ecclesiology during the time of Zärä Yaqob and eventually into Christology in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Cf. Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia (1270-1527)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 207-217.

<sup>18</sup> As a patron saint of Ethiopia, Mary has a very special place in Ethiopian theology, worship and spirituality. In addition to the numerous monthly commemorations and yearly feasts in her name, substantial part of the Ethiopian Liturgy is dedicated to her praise and prayers. Furthermore, Ethiopia prides itself of the manuscripts that deal with her ‘biography’ (*Nägärä Mariam*), praises to her (*Widasse Mariam* and *Arganonä Dīngil*) and her miracles and wondrous deeds (*Tä’ammrä Mariam*). Delineating the line between Mariology (theology of Mary) and Mariolatry (Marian worship), however, has never been easy in Ethiopia. Disputes over the place of Mary occurred as early as during the reign of Yīgba S’iyon (1285-1294), when some iconoclasts rejected prostrating to the icon of Mary (by implication to Mary). It was precisely because of this tension, between Mariology and Mariolatry, which the *Est’ifanosawyan* movement (named after its founder Abba Est’ifanos) was born during the reign of the philosopher-king Zärä Yaqob (1434-1468). A Marian fanatic, Zärä-Yaqob subjected the members of the movement to severe torture (and execution) for rejecting the royal decree that requires bowing to Mary (and to the emperor), as a breaching of the first of the five non-negotiable rules of their society: worship none other than the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The *Est’ifanosawyan* movement eventually died out (ironically, not because of the great tribulations they had to endure) when they were welcomed back to the orthodox fold by the Abuna Ezra and Emperor Eskindir (1478-1494). The dissolution of the movement meant the adoption of extreme views of Mary with little or no resistance at all. To mention but few of the many instances of such changes, “bow for Mary (out of respect)” was changed to “prostrate to Mary, because she is worthy of our worship”, the formula ‘*La-kebra negsa yedallu sagid*’ (prostration is proper in honour of her reign) changed to ‘*Ne’u nesged wa-negnay latti*’ (Come, let us prostrate ourselves and submit to her). In some regions, they went on as far as saying, “Mary died for the salvation of the world.” Marian disputes did not end with the *Est’ifanosawyan*. *Yäs’ägga Lij*, one of the two loser sects at the Council of Borumeda (1878), successfully persuaded the presiding Emperor Yohannis IV (and Nigus Minilik) to banning the outrageous expression

Ethiopia, as it did in the fifth century Constantinople.<sup>20</sup> It was, rather, the lack of a unified response to the Jesuit Christology that provided the impetus for the outbreak of controversy.<sup>21</sup> Hence, Admasu's view.

የኢትዮጵያ ሊቃውንትም በዚህ ልማድ የካቶሊክ ሰባኪዎች መጥተው ባንድ አካል ኹለት ባህሪ በሉ የሚል ብጥብጥ እስካነሱበት ዘመን ድረስ ከፍሬምናጦስ ባገኙት መሠረታዊ ትምህርት ጸንተው ወልድ ዋሕድ አንድ አካል አንድ ባሕርይ በማለት ተስማምተው ይኖሩ ነበር። እኒህ ሰባኪዎች መጥተው ከመሠረተ ትምህርቱ ወጥተው ልብ ወለድ ትምህርት ኹለት ባሕርይ ማለትን በሰበኩ ጊዜ ግን ይህን ኑፋቄ ለመመለስ በበለጠ አኳኝን ታጥቀው መነሳታቸው አይካድም።<sup>22</sup>

Until the Catholic preachers caused fighting by saying “two natures in one person”, Ethiopian scholars used to live in harmony [standing] firmly in this tradition of “one Son, one person, one nature”, the fundamental teaching which they got from Frumentius. When these preachers came and preached the fictional teaching of two natures deviating from the foundational teaching, it is undeniable that they (Ethiopian scholars) rose more determined [than ever] in order to refute this heresy.<sup>23</sup>

The Jesuits effort to latinise the Orthodox Church was greeted with a call for theological debates and stiff resistance from the ordinary people rather than an

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*‘Latti yadellu wa-sebhat wa-mesla walda amlako wa-segdat* (Honour and glory for her and worship and prostration (for her), together with her Son, are meet).

<sup>19</sup> The theological reason for the outbreak of the fifth century Christological controversy in Constantinople shows this affinity between Mariology and Christology as it was Nestorius's rejection of Mary as the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), which sparked it off.

<sup>20</sup> Ayele pointed out that Tarikä Nāgäst mentions that there was a theological debate between Abba Giyorgis of Sägla and Western missionaries (*färänjočč*) during the time of Emperor Zärä Yaqob. No comment was made, however, about the nature of the debate. Abba Giyorgis subsequently authored a book that deals with the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, *Mäs 'hafä Mist 'ir*. One can deduce from this that the debate, indeed, could be over Christology. If that is true, may be, this was the first theological debate held between missionaries and the nationals of which we know very little. Cf. Ayele, *Akalawi Täwahdo*, 112-113.

<sup>21</sup> Bahru, *Modern Ethiopia*, 14.

<sup>22</sup> Admasu, *Mäddlotä Amin*, 179.

<sup>23</sup> Translation mine.

unqualified acceptance of the authority and dogmatic prescriptions of the Pope.<sup>24</sup> Public debates were, therefore, called for each party to explain and substantiate their claims, convince and convert their audience and corner and confound their opponents. Initially, the debates were highly polarised between the indigenous priests on the one hand and the foreign missionaries on the other. The successive Emperors were adjudicators. Such ‘external’ Christological debates were held during the times of Gälawdewos (1541-1559)<sup>25</sup>, Zä-Dīngil (1603-1604), Susniyos (1607-1632) and Fasilädäs (1632-1667), both parties claiming victory at various times. In the forty four years between the death of Gälawdewos and the crowning of Zä-Dīngil, Tesfazghi claims that there was no record, by any one, of any theological debate occurring between the Orthodox faithful and the papal loyalists.<sup>26</sup> Merid, however, tells us that the Emperor Minas (1559-1563) had arranged several debates between the Ethiopian theologians and their Portuguese counterparts.<sup>27</sup> Owing to his lack leadership qualities, experience and adequate knowledge of the Christian Faith, Minas used to interrupt the sophisticated theological discussions by his embarrassingly naive questions, which were easily refuted by Oviedo, and at times, degenerating into slanderous personal exchanges between Oviedo and the emperor, bringing disrepute to the dignified office Minas occupied. Oviedo, who believed that Ethiopian unification with Rome would be impossible without the use of force, tried to capitalise on the Emperor Minas’s bad temper and theological incompetence by deliberately goading him into a hasty and regrettable action in order to provide

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<sup>24</sup> Lībnä Dīngil asked Alvarez if the Catholics obey the Pope even if he his orders contradict the Scriptures which is tantamount to rejection of equating the Pope with the apostles and papal infallibility both of which Alvarez firmly believes. The incident shows that there is a deep rooted difference between Rome and Ethiopia over the all-important question of Authority and, hence, the Portuguese mission of subjugating Ethiopia to the Pope was an over-ambitious operation that was doomed to fail despite the brief success the Jesuits later scored under the capable leadership of Pedro Paez. Cf. Alvarez, *Prester John*, 308-309.

<sup>25</sup> Our source for the Christological dispute during the time of Emperor Gälawdewos was Admasu. It has not been possible to verify Admasu’s sources.

<sup>26</sup> Tesfazghi Uqubit, *Current Christological Positions*, 58

<sup>27</sup> Merid, *Southern Ethiopia*, 185.

the Portuguese King with justification to invade the country that he had recently befriended without arousing the condemnation of other European countries. He had tried the same method with Gälawdewos before but without success because of Gälawdewos' maturity and tolerance of Oviedo as a token of indebtedness to the Portuguese mission.

### 2.2.1. The First Theological Debate

The first theological debate between Jesuit missionaries and Orthodox monks was held during the reign of King Gälawdewos, sometime between 1557-1559. Abba Ayyälä Täklä Haymanot, however, maintained that the first known debate between missionaries and nationals happened much later, in 1603/1604 at the time of King Zä-Dīngil.<sup>28</sup> This view, nonetheless, was not supported by E. Cerulli and Tesfazghi.<sup>29</sup> E. Cerulli, who in his introduction to his translation of the *Mäzgäbä Haymanot*, a theological manual of the Ethiopian Church written at the time of Gälawdewos to refute Chalcedonian theology, has pointed out that the fact that *Mäzgäbä Haymanot* mentions the name of King Gälawdewos but fails to include his martyrdom fighting with the Muslims in 1559, an act of bravery that led to his canonization by the Ethiopian Church, suggests that the writing of *Mäzgäbä Haymanot* predates the death of the Emperor. Based on this observation, he proposed that a theological debate was most likely held during the reign of Gälawdewos.<sup>30</sup> Following Cerulli, until conclusively and decisively disproved by future research, we proceed with the assumption that the first debate between the priests and the preachers was held with Gälawedewos watching.

According to Admasu, the occasion for the forum was Bermudez's insistence on promoting his personal interest to be the first Roman Catholic bishop in Ethiopia; to

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<sup>28</sup> Ayyälä, *Yä-Ītyyop'ya Betä Kīrstyān*, 115.

<sup>29</sup> Tesfazghi, *Current Christological Positions*, 56.

<sup>30</sup> E. Cerulli, *Scritti teologici etiopici dei secoli XVI-XVII*, vol. II (La storia dei Quattro Concili ed altri opuscoli monofisiti), città del Vaticano 1960, p. iii.

fulfil Portugal's territorial ambition and forge an ecclesiastical relationship between the Ethiopian Church and the Vatican at the expense of Alexandria.

ኢትዮጵያ ግራኝ አህመድ በወረራት ጊዜ አጼ ልብነ ድንግል ከፖርቱጊዝ መንግሥት እርዳታ ጠይቀው እርሳቸው ከሞቱ በኋላ በፖርቱጊዞች እርዳታ ግራኝ ድል ኾኖ ኢትዮጵያ ሙሉ ነጻነቷን አግኝታ መንግሥቷን በትክክል ማቋቋም የታወቀ ነው። በዚህ ጊዜ ከኢትዮጵያ ተልኮ ፖርቱጊዞችን ለርዳታ ያመጣው ቤርሙድዝ ከኢትዮጵያ ግዛት ገሚሱ ለፖርቱጊዝ መንግሥት ይሰጥ፤ በኢትዮጵያ ቤተክርስቲያንም አቡን ከእንግዲህ ወዲያ ከእስክንድርያ መምጣቱ ቀርቶ ከሮም ይምጣ፤ እኔም ለኢትዮጵያ አንደኛ መጀመሪያ ሮማዊ ጳጳስ ልኹን ብሎ ዐፄ ገላውዴዎስን ጠየቀ።<sup>31</sup>

It is a well-known fact that King Libinä Dingil requested assistance from the Portuguese government when Ahmad the left-handed invaded Ethiopia and that he was defeated, after his (Libinä Dingil's) death, with the help of the Portuguese and Ethiopia regained her full independence and completely restored her government. At this time, Bermudes, who was sent by Ethiopia and brought the Portuguese help, asked the King Gälawdewos that half of Ethiopian territory to be handed over to Portugal; a bishop for Ethiopia should come from Rome rather than Alexandria from now on and I should be the first bishop to Ethiopia from Rome.<sup>32</sup>

Two monks from Dima Giyorgis (Gojjam), namely Abba Zikry and Abba P'awli, represented the Ethiopian party. With the exception of one named Leo (ironically, a namesake of Leo the Great), not much was known about the names or any identities of their opponents other than them being collectively described as 'the Romans', a generic term referring to their religious affiliation as much as their country of origin.<sup>33</sup> Five rounds of questions were asked at the end of which the Romans run out of words (*Bäzih gize Romawyan mäls at't'itāw zimm alu* or with singular subject, *Bäzih gize Romawi mäls at't'ito zimm alä*). The debate began with monks asking the missionaries of their religious convictions and national affinities.

ኢትዮጵያን ሮማውያንን ሀገራችሁ ወዴት ነው፤ ሃይማኖታችሁስ ምንድነው ሲሉ ጠየቋቸው።

The Ethiopians asked the 'where did you come from and what is your religion?'<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 179.

<sup>32</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>33</sup> We have not been able to trace Admasu's source as he doesn't make any direct reference or indirect inference to his source (s) other than saying according to the written and oral tradition of the Church.

<sup>34</sup> Translation mine.

ሮማውያን ሲመልሱ ሀገራችን ሮም ነው ሃይማኖታችንም ኹለት ባሕርይ  
ኹለት ጠባይዕ አንዱ የመለኮቲ አንዱ የትስእብቲ እንላለን፡፡ ሁለተኛም  
ወልድ ከአብ ያንሳል መንፈስ ቅዱስም ከወልድ ያንሳል እንላለን አሏቸው፡፡

The Romans replied saying ‘we came from Rome and our faith is two ‘*bahiry*’ (person) and two *t’abay* (natures) in Christ, the one of his divinity and the other of his humanity. And secondly we say that the Son is inferior to the Father and the Holy Spirit is inferior to the Son.’<sup>35</sup>

After confirming their origin as ‘from Rome’, the missionaries defined their religion in Christological terms rather than in terms of any denomination including ‘Christian’ or even a ‘Roman Catholic’ for that matter. This is not surprising given the importance of Christology for the early Church in general and for medieval Church of Ethiopia in particular. What is unexpected was their confession of faith in the existence of two *bahiryat* and two *t’abayat* in Christ. This is a flagrant contradiction with the Chalcedonian definition of Faith, which the Roman Catholic Church embraced, that accepts the unity of the person (*bahiry*) of Christ and the duality of his natures (*t’abayat*). Hence, this is more of an attribution by Admasu or the author(s) of his source(s) on the missionaries rather than an actual confession by them. In his well-meaning but failed attempt to keep the integrity of the humanity and divinity of Christ intact, we have shown elsewhere in this thesis that Nestorius of Constantinople had spoken of two natures and two persons (*prosopa*) in Christ that were united in the third *prosopon* of the union as an alternative to Cyril’s hypostatic union which he thought would compromise the human and divine natures of the unique Son. One wonders if the missionaries were blamed for promoting either a Christology more Nestorian than Nestorius himself or even the two sons Christology of Paul of Samosata based on their alleged confession of two *bahiryat* and two *tabayat* without paying any attention for the need to establishing some kind of unity in Christ.

The second part of their answer, that is, the inferiority of the Son to the Father and his superiority over the Holy Spirit, at first glance, seems to suggest that the Romans were struggling to explain the difficult doctrine of functional and purely voluntary hierarchy between the three ontologically co-equal persons of the Trinity.

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<sup>35</sup> Translation mine.



With a second look, nonetheless, it is not untenable to treat this as a critical reference to the Western theology (Roman Catholic and Protestant) of the *filioque* which the Orthodox Churches, Ethiopia included, duly reject. In any case, the Ethiopians responded by demanding the Romans substantiate their claim using the Scriptures.

ኢትዮጵያውያን ሲመልሱ ከቅዱሳን መጻሕፍት እንዲህ የሚል ምን አለ እስኪ አስረዱን አሏቸው፡፡

The Ethiopians replied by saying ‘please explain to us if there is anything which says this in the Scriptures?’<sup>36</sup>

ሮማውያን ሲመልሱ እርሱው ራሱ ወልድ ደቀመዛሙርቱ ሕልፈተ ዓለም መቼ ነው ብለው ቢጠይቁት መላእክትም ቢኾኑ ወልድም ቢኾን ከአብ በቀር ያችን ዕለት ያችን ሰዓት የሚያውቃት የለም ብሏል፡፡ ስለዚህ አብ መለኮት ስለሆነ ያውቃል ወልደ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ግን መለኮት ስላልኾኑ አያውቁም እንላለን፤ እናነንተ ይህን ነገር ምን ትሉታላችሁ አሉ፡፡

The Romans answered when his disciples asked him about the end of the world, Jesus himself has said ‘No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father’ (Mt. 24:36). Therefore we say the Father knows because he is divine (*Mäläkot*) but the Son and the Holy Spirit do not know because they are not divine. What do you say about this?’<sup>37</sup>

In their attempt to substantiate their position, the missionaries rejected the very deity (*Mäläkot*) of the Son and of the Holy Spirit based on an idiosyncratic interpretation of Matthew 24:36. This contradicts and invalidates their previous claim of faith in the presence of divine nature in Christ alongside his humanity for if Christ is not divine (*Mäläkot*), then the whole question of the co-existence within him of human and divine natures becomes irrelevant. Their position, which cannot be seen as representative of the Roman Catholic Church, then or now; is in blatant conflict with the historical Christian faith as expressed in the creeds of Nicaea (AD 325), Constantinople (AD 381) or even Chalcedon (AD 451) as well as placing them further to the right of the Arians who were prepared to give some divinity to the Son, as God’s sole creative agent, albeit to a lesser degree to that of the Father whom they describe as ‘Almighty’.

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<sup>36</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>37</sup> Translation mine. The biblical text is taken from Matthew 24:39.

In sharp contrast, the Ethiopians' response to the very same question was to confess adherence to the historical dogma of the unity of the triune Godhead.

አባ ዝክሪ ሲመልስ ሦስቱን አካላት አብ፤ ወልድ መንፈስ ቅዱስን ፩ አምላክ የምንላቸው አብን ልብ ወልድን ቃል መንፈስ ቅዱስን እስትንፋስ ብለን በአብ ልብነት ያስባሉ ያውቃሉ፤ በወልድ ቃልነት ይናገራሉ በመንፈስ ቅዱስ እስትንፋስነት ሕያዋን ኾነው ይኖራሉ ለየራሳቸው ልብ ቃል እስትንፋስ የላቸውም በማለት ነው።

Abba Zikry replied by saying 'Three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God. We say of them: 'one God' because having said the Father 'Li'ib' (=heart or intelligence), the Son: 'Qa'al' (Word or Wisdom), and the Holy Spirit 'İssitinfas' (Breath or Life), we say that they know and think by the Fathers 'Li'ib' (=heart or intelligence), and speak by the Son's 'Qal' (=Word or Wisdom) and live (being immortal) by the Holy Spirit's 'İssitinfas' (Life or Breath'). That means each one of them does not have his own proper 'lib', 'Q'al' and 'İssitinfas'.<sup>38</sup>

Fundamental to the Orthodox understanding of the Trinitarian theology is the doctrine of *perichoresis*. The two cardinal teachings of the Christian Church are but two sides of the same coin. While the unity of the God and the 'Threeness' of the persons is the proper realm of the Mystery of the Trinity, it is the doctrine of the *perichoresis* that deals with the interpersonal relationship between the different persons, namely where one is, all are. One cannot exist without the other. This metaphorical way of addressing the interpersonal relationship on the three persons of the Trinity as the 'Heart, Wisdom and Breath' of a person emphasises the 'Oneness' of God over and above the 'Threeness' of the persons to such an extent that it is practically impossible even to think about what one of the persons of the Godhead knows (or does not know) in isolation from the rest. What is known to the one is instantaneously known to the others through the one who knows because of the perfect and absolute oneness of the Godhead. Therefore, the Orthodox theologians argued,

ልብ፤ ቃል እስትንፋስ ያለው አንድ ሰው በልቡ አስቦት ዐውቆት ለመናገር ጊዜው ባለመድረሱ ሰዓት እየጠበቀለት ሰውሮ የያዘውን ነገር ጊዜው ባለመድረሱ ምክንያት በቃሉ ሳይናገረው ቢቆይ ቢጠየቅም ዛሬ አልናገረውም ቢል አያውቀውም እንደማይባል ወልድም ያችን ዕለት ያችን ሰዓት ከአብ በቀር ወልድ አያውቃትም ማለቱ ያችን ዕለት ያችን ሰዓት የምትገለጽበት ጊዜው እስኪደርስ በልቤ በአብ ሰውሬ አቆያታለሁ እንጂ ዛሬ በቃልነቴ አውጥቼ አልናገራትም ማለቱ ነው እንጂ የማያውቃት ኾኖ አይደለም። እንዲህስ ባይኾን የከዊን ስማቸውና ግብራቸው ተፋልሶ አብ ቃል፤ ወልድ ልብ በተባሉ ነበረ አለው። በዚህ ጊዜ ሮማውያን መልስ አጥተው ዝም አሉ።

<sup>38</sup> Translation Tesfazghi.

### **He was Anointed because He was Incarnated**

If a man who has a ‘Li’ib’, Qa’al and ‘issitinfas’ does not want, here and now, to tell what he thinks and knows in his ‘Li’ib’, because the hour of telling it has not yet arrived, it does not mean that he does not know that hour and date. So it is with the saying of Jesus. By ‘nor the Son’ [Mt. 24:36; Jn. 14:28], he meant that ‘until the time in which that day and hour revealed, I shall conceal it in my Heart in the Father’. He does not mean he does not know it. Otherwise their mode of being or relationship would be altered: the Father would be called ‘Word’, the Son ‘Heart’.

We know, from elsewhere, that there are differences of interpretation between the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches with regard to the meaning of Mt. 24:36: ‘No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father’. Despite their differing understanding of the meaning of this, and other similar texts<sup>39</sup>, they both arrive at the same conclusion, that is, accepting the Nicene doctrine of the deity and equality of Jesus with the Father as the authentic elaboration of the mind of the apostles. Since they believe that Christ is one out of two after the incarnation, the Ethiopian reading is that Jesus is equal with the Father, even in his humanity, hence this statement of his should be taken figuratively as an expression of his true humility rather than, literally, as a reflection of a reality. The Roman Catholic Church, whose Christology allows for the attribution of the words and deeds of Christ to his corresponding divine or human nature after the union, believes Jesus had no need to show his humility in this way and that the statement was true of the pre-resurrection Jesus. The missionaries, on the contrary, allegedly read this passage in a purely Arian fashion upholding the twin error of ontological subordination and denial of the deity of Jesus as well as of the Holy Spirit.

Of course the Oriental Orthodox Churches accuse the Western Churches (Catholic and Protestant alike) and their Eastern namesake of Nestorianism because of their acceptance of the co-existence of the two natures of Christ after the incarnation in the shape of ‘two natures one person’ formula. With the benefit of hindsight, that has now been officially established as a well-meaning misunderstanding down to semantic and historical reasons.

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<sup>39</sup> And similar passages such as Jn. 14:28.

But the missionaries, apparently, openly confessed the unadulterated Nestorianism of ‘two persons, two natures’. It is doubtful that even Nestorius himself would have subscribed to this extreme position, let alone the Catholic Church. Whether the Romans have misunderstood the Ge’ez Christological terminologies (they didn’t mean what they said) or the Ethiopians misinterpreted the Latin terms is difficult to determine as we don’t have other records of the same event, in any language, to make comparisons. Furthermore, it is worth noting that while the missionaries employed highly specialised and potentially precarious theological terms through a medium of language that was not native to them, to explain their creed, the Ethiopians, on the contrary, presented their Christology within a Trinitarian framework without using complex terms pertaining to the natures and person of Christ. In any case, According to Admasu, the Ethiopians were the clear winners of this first encounter with the Jesuits.

After a prolonged silence, and a Trinitarian discourse, one of the Romans raised an issue that can be classified as Christology proper. He argued that the human nature of Christ (*Siga*) did not become divine (*Mäläkot*) nor did divine (*Mäläkot*) became human. This, of course, could be taken as a thinly veiled attack on the doctrine of *communicato idiomatum* (communication of natures) to which Cyrillo-Alexandrian Orthodoxy holds. Rather the relationship between the humanity and divinity in Christ is depicted as a cloth and a body whereby the former representing the flesh and the latter the divinity or dweller (divine nature) and dwelling place (humanity). Furthermore, this relationship was portrayed essentially as a temporary modality that was required during the earthly life of Jesus rather than being eternal from the time of the incarnation.

ከጥቂት ጊዜ በኋላ አንድ ሮማዊ ተነስቶ መለኮት ሥጋ አልኾነም፤ ሥጋም መለኮት አልኾነም፤ ሥጋ ለመለኮት እንደ ብረት ልብስ እንደ ጥሩር ኾነው፤ መለኮትና ሥጋ ነጻሪና ማሳደር ኾነው መለኮት የመለኮትን ሥራ ትስእብትም የትስእብትን ሥራ ሲሠሩ ኖረው በዕርጉቱ ጊዜ የለበሰውን ሥጋ አውልቆ በ፪ኛው ሰማይ አኑሮት በየማነ አብ በዘባነ ኪሩብ ተቀመጠ። የዚህም ምሳሌው አንድ ንጉሥ ለጦርንት ወደ ሰልፍ ሲገባ የጦርንት ልብስ ይለብሳል፤ ሲዋጋ ውሎ ድል ካደረገ በኋላ የለበሰውን የጦር ልብስ አውልቆ ከግምጃ ቤቱ ሰቅሎ ልብስ መንግሥቱን ለብሶ በዙፋኑ ላይ እንደሚቀመጠው ያለ ነው እንጂ ትስብእቱን ከመለኮቱ ጋራ በአባቱ ቀኝ አያስቀምጠውም አለ።

After a while, a Roman got up and said, [Christ’s] divinity did not become human nor did [his] humanity become divine. Flesh was like a metallic breastplate to divinity. Divine and human [respectively] being indweller and abode, the divine doing divine works and humanity doing human works, he took his humanity off and left it at the Third Sky during his ascension and sat at the right hand of the Father at the throne of Cherub like a king who

## He was Anointed because He was Incarnated

enters a battle with a body armour, fights the whole day in it, and after becoming victorious, hangs it in the store and get changed into his kingly attire and sits on his throne. He would not sit humanity in the right hand of God with the divine.

In responding to what seems to us a form of Apollinarianism that taught the divine Word replaced the soul of Christ, Abba Zikry used the soul/body analogy, instead of a cloth/body metaphor, to illustrate the perfection of the divine human relationship in Christ as opposed to simple co-habitation proposed by his opponents. Just like the invisible soul and corporeal flesh unite to become a human person, divinity and humanity were united to become one person without losing their respective identity. Even though Abba Zikry did not explicitly acknowledge his source, the soul/body analogy, with all its already recognised limitations, has, nevertheless, a Cyrillo-Alexandrian undertone.

አባ ዝክሪ ሲመልስ ነፍስ ርቀቷን ሳትለቅ፤ ሥጋ ግዙፍ፤ ውሱን መኾኑን ሳይለቅ ተዋሕደው አንድ ሰው እንዲኾኑ መለኮት ምልክቱን፤ ስፍሐቱን፤ ርቀቱን ሳይለቅ፤ ትስብእትም ግዙፉን፤ ውስንነቱን ሳይለቅ በተዋሕዶ አንድ አካል አንድ ባሕርይ ኾኗል እንጂ እንደ ልብስና እንደ ገላ አይደለም አለ።

Abba Zikry replied saying, just like the soul, without losing its abstractness, and the body, without losing its corporeality and finiteness, unite and become one person; divinity without losing completeness, broadness and infiniteness, and humanity without losing corporality and finiteness, through the union, have become one person, one hypostasis rather than being like a cloth and body.

The Roman asked a follow-on question, if this mortal flesh (*māwati siga*) could go wherever the divine goes (*Mäläkot kä-därrässäbbät hullu*)?

ሮማዊ መለኮት ከደረሰበት ኹሉ ይህ መዋቲ ትስብእት ደረሰ ትላለህን አለ።

Roman: Do you say mortal man went wherever divinity went?)

Essentially, this was not a new question as it was the rephrasing of the previous question, namely that Jesus, who at this moment is seated at the right hand of God, is not in his incarnate mode but in his pre-incarnate form as the eternal Logos leaving his body elsewhere at the ‘Third sky’.

Abba Zikry’s reply was that by virtue of the union, the divinity inherited the nature of the humanity and the humanity partook in the characteristics of the divinity but neither compromised their original identity.

አባ ዝክሪ ሲመልስ እኔስ መለኮትና ትስብእት በተዋሕዶ አንድ ስለኾኑ መለኮት በሥጋ ውሱን ግዙፍ ኾነ፤ ትስብእትም በመለኮት ምሉእ፤ ስፍሐ፤ ረቂቅ ኾነ እሳለሁ፤ ትስብእትም ከመለኮት

ተለይቶ በ፲ኛው ሰማይ እንዳልቀረ በየማነ አብ በዘባነ ኪሩብ እንደትቀመጠም ሲያስረዳ አሜሃ ትሬጃይም ለወልደ እንሰ እመሕያው እንዘ ይነብር በየማነ እግዚአብሔር ብሏል። በክበበ ትስብእት፤ በግርማ መለኮት ዳግም እንዲመጣ ሲያስረዳም ወአመ ይመጽእ ወልደ እንሰ እመሕያው በስበሐተ አቡሁ ወኮሎሙ መላእክቲሁ ምስሌሁ ብሏል ይህ ንባብ በቅዱስ ወንጌል መጻፉን ታምናለህ ትክዳለህ አለው። ሮማዊ፤ መልስ አጥቶ ዝም አለ።

Abba Zikry replied saying as for me, I believe, because divine and human have become one by virtue of the union, I say divinity became finite and concrete; humanity, too, became complete, broad, and intangible. [The Scripture]

The third series of questions began with one of the questioning, again, the divinity of Christ.

ሮማዊ፤ እኔ ክርቶስን ፍጡር እለዋለሁ አለ።

Roman: I would call Christ a creature.

He may or may not be the same person who asked the previous question(s) for his identity was not obvious from the text. But on the natives' side we know that this time it was Abba P'awli, the second speaker, who challenged the missionary to substantiate his claims from the Scriptures.

አባ ጳውሊ ሲመልስ ክርቶስን ፍጡር የሚል ንባብ ከምን ታገኛለህ አለው።

Abba P'owli: Where do you find a text that says Christ is a creature?

The foreigner provided three biblical stories to substantiate his claim: the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4:3-42); the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11: 1-46) and the miraculous healing of two blind men (Matthew 20:29-34<sup>40</sup>). The first account was used to prove that Jesus was not omnipotent. The Roman argued if he were divine, he would not have begged water from the Samaritan woman (John 4:7) for all the water in the entire universe belongs to him.

ሮማዊ፤ አምላክ ከኾነ ከሳምራዊት ውኃ እስኪለምን ድረስ ለምን ተጠማ፤ ከላይ ያለው ሐኖስ ከታች ያለው ውቅያኖስ በማሃል እጁ ሲሸን አምላክ ይጠማልን አለ።

<sup>40</sup> There is a similar story in Luke 18: 35-43 which could have served the same purpose. The Lukan narrative, however, mentions one blind man rather than two.

## He was Anointed because He was Incarnated

Roman: If he was [really] God, why was he so thirsty to such an extent that he begged water from the Samaritan [woman]? Why was God thirsty when he has in the palm of his hand the sphere above and the ocean below [the sky]?

Similarly, Jesus' apparent ignorance of where Lazarus was buried (John 11:34) or what the blind men were seeking (Matthew 20:32) was presented as a proof that he lacks one of the defining attributes of God, i.e., omniscience.

ሮማዊ፡ አምላክ ከኾነ አልዓዛርን ወዴት ቀበራችሁት ብሎ ለምን ጠየቀ የተቀበረበትን ባላወቀውም ነበረን። ኸለቱ ዕውራንስ የዳዊት ልጅ ይቅር በለን ባሉት ጊዜ ምን ትሻላችሁ ለምን ጠየቃቸው የሚሹትን ባላወቀም ነበረን አለ።

Roman: If he is [truly] God, why did he ask where Lazarus was buried; Should he have known? How about when the two blind men said to him ‘the Son of David, have mercy upon us’, why did he ask them what they need, Shouldn’t he have known what they were seeking?

Once again, the arguments were not presented from a Chalcedonian vantage point, as one would have expected from a Catholic missionaries, providing a strong case for the existence of the human nature in Christ after the union, leaving the burden of the proof of single nature for the priests, rather than questioning the fundamental creedal affirmation of the very deity of Jesus.

What Abba P’awli did was to show to the Romans that the passage he cited to repudiate the deity of Jesus, on the contrary, are actually compelling evidences for Jesus’s claim to be fully God. If Jesus were a creature, asked Abba P’awli, how come he said to the Samaritan woman?

አባ ቋውሊ ሲመልስ ፍጡር ከኾነ የእግዚአብሔርንስ ስጦታ ዐውቀኸ ቢኾን ይህ ውኃ አጠጭኝ ብሎ የሚለምንሽ ማን እንደ ኾነ ተገንዝበኸ አንቺ የሕይወትን ውኃ አጠጣኝ ብለኸ በለምንሽው ነበረ እርሱም በሰጠኸ ነበረ ከዚህ ውኃ የሚጠጣ ኸሉ ዳግመኛ ይጠማል፤ እኔ ከምሰጠው ውኃ የሚጠጣ ግን ይህ እኔ የምሰጠው ውኃ ለዘላለም ሕያወት ሊኾነው ከውስጡ ሲመነጭ ይኖራል እንጂ ዳግመኛ አየጠማም ለምን አላት አለው።

If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink’, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to

eternal life?<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, Abba P’awli argued if God asked Adam where he was (Genesis 3:9) and inquired what Moses was holding with his hand (Exodus 4:2) without his omniscience being doubted, Jesus asking for the whereabouts of Lazarus’ tomb and the needs of the two blind men cannot be sufficient grounds to reject his omniscience and divinity. If he were a creature, how could he raise Lazarus from the dead or restore sight to the blind?

አባ ጳውሊ ሲመልስ እግዚአብሔር አዳምን አይቱ ሀሎክ ብሎ ጠየቀው ይላል ዘፍ ፫:፱። መሴንም ምንት ውስተ እዴክ ብሎ ጠየቀው ይላል፤ ዘፀ ፱:፪። እግዚአብሔር እንዲህ ብሎ መጠየቁ አዳም ያለበትን ቦታ አጥቶት መሴም በእጁ ምን እንደ ያዘ አላውቀው ብሎ ይኾን አይደለም። ይህም ይህን የመሰለ ጥያቄ ነው። በዚያውስ ላይ ፍጡር ከኾነ አልዓዛር ነፃ ፃእ አፍኦ እመቃብር ብሎ ሊያስነግው እንደምን ቻለ በደረቅ ግንባርስ ዐይን ሊፈጥር እንደምን ቻለ አለው።

In response, Abba P’awli said, Genesis 3:9 says God asked Adam ‘Where are you?’. And Exodus 4:2 says He also asked Moses ‘What is in your hand? It was not was not because he did not know where Adam was or what was in Moses’ hand that God was asking questions like these. Your questions are similar to these. Moreover, if he were a creature, how could he raise Lazarus telling him ‘Come out of the grave!’ or how did he manage to create eyes in ‘flat’ (*däräq*) forehead?

The missionary’s reply was that the miracles of Jesus, whether raising the dead or healing the blind, could not justify the deity of Jesus for many saints have been able to perform miracles like these, seemingly, without being elevated to the status of divinity. Abba P’awli was quick to point out that the authority of the saints was derived but the authority of Jesus was inherent, to which the Jesuit had no answer.

The Roman answered the saints perform many different miracles similar to this.

ሮማዊ፡ ይህን የመሳሰለስ ቅዱሳን ልዩ ልዩ የኾኑ ብዙ ተአምራት ያደርጋሉ አለ።

አባ ጳውሊ ሲመልስ ቅዱሳን ልዩ ልዩ ተአምራት ቢያደርጉ የእርሱን ስም ጠርተው በስሙ ለአኒየሱስ ናዝሬዊ ተንሥእ ወሐር እያሉ ነው። ግብ ሐዋ ፫:፮፤ ፱:፴፬፤ ፲፮:፲፰። እርሱ ግን እኤዝዘክ ፃእ እምኔሁ እያለ በገዛ ሥለጣኑ ነውና ቅዱሳን ከሚያደርጉት ተአምራት ጋራ ሊነጻጸር አይገባውም አለ።

Abba P’awli countered by saying if the saints perform various miracles, it was by calling uo on his name; [for example] saying ‘In the name of Jesus rise up and walk’ Acts 3:6; 9:34;

<sup>41</sup> RSV: John 4:10-14.



16:18. He (Jesus), however, was [doing these] by his own authority, saying, ‘I command you’ and, therefore, should not be compared with the saints.<sup>42</sup>

በዚህ ጊዜ ሮማዊ መልስ አጥቶ ዝም አለ።

This brings us to the final and fifth question of the debate. A certain Leo, coincidentally the namesake of the Pope responsible for the drafting of the Chalcedonian Definition of Faith, the only person to be identified by name from among the missionaries, presented a teaching that can easily be described as adoptionist. According to him, at the point of incarnation the divine Logos indwelt the flesh he took from (*adärräbat inji altäwahadäwim*) Mary but it was precisely at his baptism that the union of the divinity and humanity of Jesus was consummated to make him God by grace (*Yä-S’ägga Amlak*), after which time and because of which, he began performing miracles.

ስሙን ልዩን የሚሉት አንድ ሮማዊ ተነስቶ ወልደ አብ ከሰማየ ሰማያት ወርዶ ሥጋ ማርያምን በለበሰ ጊዜ ሰይፍ በሰገባው እንዲከተትና እንዲቀመጥ አደረበት እንጂ አልተዋሐደውም፤ በቧ ዘመኑ በዮረዳኖስ በተመቀ ጊዜ መንፈስ ቅዱስ በራሱ ላይ ሲቀመጥ መለኮት ከትስብእቱ ጋር ተዋሐደ፤ የጸጋ አምላክ ሆነ መዋቲ ትስብእትም የማይሞተ ኾነ፤ ከቧ ዘመን በፊት የጸጋ አምላክ ስላልሆነ አምላካዊ ሥራ አልሠራም ከተጠመቀ በኋላ ግን የጸጋ አምላክ ስለሆነ ውኃውን ወይን አደረገ ብዙ የአምላክነት ሥራ ሠራ አለ።

Aceratin Roman, called Leo, got up and said when the Son of God (*Wäldä Abb*) came down and took flesh from Mary, he indwelt (*addärräbbät*) the body he assumed like a sword will be placed in its case, rather than uniting himself with him (*altäwahadäwim*). But when he was baptised in the River Jordan at the age of thirty, when the Spirit descended on his head, the divine (*Mälakot*) was united with his humanity (*tisibī’itu*); he became God by grace (*yä-säga Amlak*); mortal human (*mäwati tisibī’it*) became immortal. He was unable to do divine deeds (*amalakawi sira*) until he was thirty because he was not God by grace but after he was baptised, because he became God by grace, he made the water wine and did many other divine deeds.

A businessman, wrongly believed to have come from Alexandria or to hold Alexandrian position,<sup>43</sup> who nonetheless perceptively understood the Ethiopian dogma, inexplicably espoused Leo’s teaching. The essence of his argument was that the Christology of the

<sup>42</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>43</sup> The phrase ‘Aleksandrawi’ (i.e. Alexandrian) could equally be a reference to his place of origin or theological persuasion.

Roman Church is more plausible than the Alexandrian faith since Jesus' reception of the Spirit at his baptism, to be Son by grace (*Yä-S'ägga Lij*), and his subsequent miracles were clearly demonstrable, unlike his appropriation of the Spirit in the womb of the Virgin to become the ontological Son of God (*Yä-bahiry Lij*) in his humanity, for which no objective proof or reasonable explanation can be supplied other than (blind) faith.

እንደዚሁም በንግድ ምክንያት መጥቶ እስከነደርያዊ መስሎ በኢትዮጵያ የሚኖር አንድ ሰው ተነሥቶ እንዲህ ሲል ተናገረ፡ እናንተ ኢትዮጵያውያን ቃል ሥጋ በለበስ ጊዜ በማኅፀን ማርያም መንፈስ ቅዱስን ተቀብሎ የባሕርይ አምላክ ሆነ ትላላችሁ ግን፤ በማኅፀን መንፈስ ቅዱስን ሲቀበል ያየው የለም። ሮማውያን ግን እስከ ፴ ዘመን በሰብአዊ ግብር ኖሮ ሲጠመቅ፤ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ሰው ኹሉ እያየው በራሱ ላይ ስለተቀመጠበት የጸጋ ሆኖ የአምላክነትን ሥራ ሠራ ይላሉና ከእስከነደርያ ሃይማኖት የሮማ ሃይማኖት ትሻላላች አለ።

Likewise, a certain man who came to Ethiopia to trade and was settled there, pretending to be Alexandrian, got and said this: ‘You Ethiopians say when the Word became flesh he also became God by ontology after receiving the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. But no-one had seen him receiving the Spirit in Mary’s womb. The Romans, nevertheless, say when Jesus was baptised after living like a normal human being (*bä-säbi’awi gibir noro*) for thirty years, because the Holy Spirit visibly descended on his head, he became God by grace and began to do divine works (*yä-amlakinnät sirä*) . For this reason, the religion of the Romans is better than the religion of Alexandria;

There are some interesting observations to be made about the latest speaker, the businessman. First, he was entirely right to make connection between Ethiopian and Alexandrian Christologies. If Ethiopian Christology has certain peculiarities that are not true of Alexandrian teaching, this was a later development in Ethiopian doctrinal history, which we shall discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. It’s not, therefore, unwarranted to equate Alexandrian Christology with that of Ethiopian. Secondly, unlike the so called missionaries, he was able to succinctly summarise the essence of the Alexandrian Christology which Ethiopia accepted as well as the Christology the Roman missionaries were hitherto defending. His weakness, however, lies, first of all, in the fact that, at least at this stage, he failed to recognise that the missionaries were not presenting a unified position as they propagated forms of Arianism, Apollinarianism and adoptionism in the name of Roman Catholicism. Furthermore, the teaching he ascribed to the Roman Church was an outrageously gross misrepresentation of the Church’s theology. In truth, on the issue of the timing of the reception of the Spirit by Jesus, the Roman Catholic position was and still is the same as that of Alexandrian, in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This, however, was not apparent for Abba P’awli and colleagues at the time. His approach was to provide biblical evidence from Luke 1:35 that at the time of Jesus’s inception, all the three persons of the

Trinity had indwelled Mary's womb, albeit for different purposes: the Father for strengthening; the Holy Spirit for cleansing and the Son to be incarnated. Abba P'awli, added, the indwelling of the Trinity in Mary's womb should not be mistaken for the incarnation of the Trinity as it was only the Son who took flesh from Mary and became human a being.

አባ ጳውሊ ሲመልስ፡ ቅዱስ ገብርኤል ለእመቤታችን ሲያበስራት መንፈስ ቅዱስ በአንቺ ላይ ይመጣል የአብም ኃይሉ ይጋረድሻል ካንቺ የሚወለደውም ቅዱስ ነው የልዑል የእግዚአብሔር ልጅ ይባላል። ብሎም ቪቱም አካላት በማግሰነ ማርያም እንደ አደሩ ተናግሯል። ማደራቸውም አብ ለአጽንዖ፤ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ለአንጾሐ ወልድ ለለቢሰ ሥጋ ነው እንጂ ቪቱ ኹሉ ሥጋ ያደሩ አይምሰልህ።

Abba P'awli reply was the angel Gabriel had confirmed that all the three persons of the Tinity had indwelled the Mary's womb when he broke the good news to our Lady saying, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God'. The reasons for their indwelling were the Father to strengthen; the Holy Spirit for cleansing and the Son for incarnation; do not think all the three of them were incarnated.

After neatly summarising his position, Abba P'awli began to unpack the mysterious entrance of all the persons of the Trinity into Mary's womb.

በዚህ ጊዜ መለኮት ርቀቱን ለቆ ሳይገዛፍ ሳይለወጥ፤ ትስብእትም ግዘፉን ለቆ ሳይረቅ ሳይለወጥ እንደ ነፍስና እንደ ሥጋ በተዋሕዶ አንድ አካል አንድ ባሕርይ ሆነ። ወልድ ለለቢሰ ሥጋ ማለት ይህ ነው። አብ ለአጽንዖ ማለትም ሰማይ ምድር የማይወስኑትን ምሉእ ስፋት ረቂቅ መለኮትን እመቤታችን በጠባብ ማግሰን እንድትችለው አጽናት ማለት ነው። መንፈስ ቅዱስ ለአንጾሐ ማለትም ትስብእትን ከአዳም መርገም አንጽቶ ቀድሶ ለተዋሕዶ መለኮት የበቃ አደረገው ማለት ነው።

At this time, divinity without abandoning intangibility (*riqār*) and becoming corporeal and humanity without leaving corporeality (*gīzāf*) to become intangible; like soul and body, became one person and one nature by the virtue of the union. That's what is meant by the Son for [the purpose of] incarnation (*lābisā siga*). What is meant by the Father for 'strengthening' (*as'n'iwo*) is that He sustained Our Lady, in order to be able to carry in her narrow womb, the infinite (*mīlu'i*), the complete (*sīfuh*) and invisible (*rāqiq*) divinity that even the heaven and the earth were unable to contain. Holy Spirit for 'cleansing' (*ans'iwo*) means, He purified the humanity of Christ from the curse of Adam to make his humanity fit for the union.

After this elaboration of the co-habitation of the persons of the Trinity, fulfilling different roles, the stage was set to address head on Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan. According to Abba P'awli, what happened at Jordan River, thirty years after Jesus' birth, at the beginning of his public ministry, was an enactment, a divine drama, of what had already happened in the womb of Mary.

ይህን በማገፀን በረቂቅ ምስጢር የሠሩትን አምላካዊ ሥራ በዮርዳኖስ ወልድ በአጭር ቁመት በጠባብ ደረት ተወስኖ ሲጠመቅ በመታየት አብ ዝንቱ ውእቱ ወልድየ የሚል ድምጽ በማሰማት መንፈስ ቅዱስ በርግብ አምሳል ወርዶ በራሱ ላይ ተቀምጦ አብ ልጄ ይህ ነው ብሎ የመሰከረለት ወልድ ይህ ነው ብሎ በጣት ጠቅሶ እንደ ማሳየት በመመስከሩ ገልጸውታል እንጂ እስከዚያ ድረስ ፱ ዘመን መንፈስ ቅዱስ ተለይቶት ኖሮ በዮርዳኖስ አደረበት ማለት አይደለም አለ። ያ ሮማዊ መልስ አጥቶ ዝም አለ።

They [the three persons of the Trinity] dramatically displayed (*gāls'āwital*), this divine work, incomprehensible mystery (*rāqiq mist't'ir*), which they had done in the womb, when the Son was baptised in the River Jordan, appearing in a short physique and narrow chest (*bä-aččir qumät, bä-t't'äbab dārät*); the Father saying ‘This is my Son’ with a audible voice and the Holy Spirit descending upon him, in the likeness of a dove, and sitting on his head, which amounts to pointing with finger at the one whom God said was His Son. It was not that Jesus was without the Holy Spirit for thirty years until he was indwelt by him when he was baptised at the [River] Jordan.

This time all the missionaries had exhausted their lines of argument and they were silenced. King Gälawdeos’ closing remarks, to Abba Zikri and Abba P’awlin was revealing about the nature of the theological challenge the Ethiopian Church was facing. There had been a clear understanding that what was at stake by the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries and was, therefore, thoroughly defended by the two monks, Zikri and P’awli, who represented the Orthodox faithful, was none other than Cyrillo-Alexandrian Orthodoxy.

በዚህ ጊዜ ንጉሡ ገላውዴዎስ አባ ዝክሪንና አባ ጳውሊን እኔ ክርስቶስ ባሪያ፣ ሃይማኖቴ እንደ ሃይማኖታችሁ አርቶዶክስ እስክንድርያዊ ነው። ይህንንም እናንተ ታውቁልኛላችሁ። ነገር ግን እኛ የሕክምናና የተግባረ እድ ትምህርት የለንም ሮማውያን ብዙ ጥበብ ያውቃሉና ይህን ጥበባቸውን እስኪያሰተምሩን ድረስ በሀገራችን እንዲቆዩ ፈቃዳችሁ ይሁን ሲል ለመናቸው።

At this time, King Gälawdewos said to Abba Zikri and Abba P’awli that you know that I am the servant of Christ and my religion, like your religion, is Alexandrian Orthodoxy. But since we lack medical knowledge and artistic skills which the Romans have, I beg you to let them stay in our country until they teach us their skills.

It is our hope that we will be able to show in the rest of this thesis that it was the same zeal and quest for Cyrillo-Alexandrian Orthodoxy that was the driving force behind the development of Ethiopian Christology which resulted in the internal fragmentation of the Ethiopian Church and the formation of warring theological schools, which we shall consider at a greater length in the next chapter.

### 2.2.2. The Theological Debate during the Reign of Zä-Dīngīl

That Pedro Paez had a theological debate with the theologians of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, specifically, over the unity and duality of the natures of Christ, during the short-lived and troubled reign of Zä-Dīngīl is well recorded.<sup>44</sup> The historicity of the dispute has never been questioned, but whether it was the first of its kind in Ethiopia depends on the acceptance or rejection of the historicity of the debate that is believed to have been held during the reign of Emperor Gälawdewos.<sup>45</sup> According to Pedro Paez, Emperor Zä-Dīngīl (1603-04) called him to his palace in June 1604, a year after his arrival in Ethiopia, and expressed his wish to hear Paez answering the Ethiopian theologians over the much talked about doctrinal differences with the Roman Church which the missionaries represented. A date for the debate was set at Paez's convenience. We do not know, this time, the names of the monks that challenged Paez. They are simply described as 'some monks'.

In the previous debate, it was the missionaries who allegedly volunteered their position on the natures and person of Christ without being asked by the nationals, who seem to be more interested in Trinitarian theology than Christology. This time the very debate was specifically and exclusively on Christology. The monks who were interrogating Paez also seem to be more informed about Roman Catholicism than their predecessors were during the first phase of the debate. The first question reads: 'In many ways there is a great difference between us; in particular, the Romans say that in Christ there are two natures and that the human nature is not equal to the divine'. Paez's response, too, shows that he was better up to the task than his progenitors were. He demonstrated competence in bible knowledge as well as theology. He made his point unequivocally quoting Acts 20:28: 'Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood'. This Pauline attribution of blood to God, who is Spirit, is nonsensical unless Christ has two natures, human and divine, after the incarnation. The monks had no qualms concurring with the premise Christ is perfect God and perfect man but they rejected Paez's conclusion that he must have two natures after the union as falsity stubbornly sticking to the doctrine of one

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<sup>44</sup> Beccari C., *Rerum Aethiopicarum Scriptores Occidentales*, inediti, a saeculo XVI ad XIX, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Abba Ayele's view is that this is the first debate. Cf. Ayele, *Ethiopian Church*, 74.

nature after the union. Paez tried to solve the deadlock by suggesting that he agreed with his Ethiopian opponents that Christ is one rather than two, if that is what they meant by 'one nature'. While Paez's perceptively use of Athanasius of Alexandria to prove that Christ is equal with the Father according to his divinity but less than the Father according to his humanity, he didn't seem to have the patristic key, in particular Cyril of Alexandria, to unlock the Orthodox mentality that Christ is one out of two.

Even though the debate had reached a dead-end, rather than one party silencing the other, the Jesuits can be regarded as winners, by default, in the sense that they already have secretly won Emperor Zä-Dīngīl to their side long before the actual debate was held. A keen reformer, the emperor called Paez to his palace for a political purpose, namely to learn the European law and governance knowing well that he would face a bitter opposition from the nobilities who are resistant to change. Soon after that meeting, however, the missionary's manner and modesty won a rapport with the Emperor and his trusted advisors; Paez was allowed publicly teach to Catholic converts and the Orthodox unlike. The emperor also confides in Paez of his wish to convert to Catholicism and asked the Spaniard for a Portuguese military assistance in the likely event of the uprising of the nobilities against his regime and new religious allegiance. Paez wrote two letters in the name of the King, to the Pope and King Philip III, to this effect. Allegedly, Zä-Dīngīl single-handedly outlawed the observation of Saturday as the Sabbath without the knowledge of his political or spiritual advisors before the hoped-for Portuguese military assistance materialised. The emperor's extreme stance (which Paez thoughtfully opposed because of the timing of, rather than the correctness of the decision) provided the powerful king-making nobles, Zä-Sillase and Atnatewos, who had brought the Emperor to power by conspiring to overthrow the insubordinate Emperor Yaqob, turned against him because of his popularity and his refusal to be a puppet king as was expected of him, with the ideal excuse they had been waiting for to denounce his reign and install another king. Furthermore, the monarch made no secret of his acceptance of Paez's doctrine and his rejection of the Christology of the Faith of his ancestors as deficient. For him Christology and Trinitarian theology are inseparably linked: a Christology that fails to differentiate between natures (*Physis*) and person (hypostasis) would necessarily result in a failure to recognise the individuality of the

three persons of, otherwise one God. When the Orthodox party pleaded with him to maintain faith with his theological heritage, his reply was ‘How can your doctrine be accepted? If in Christ the divine nature has died, then the Father and the Holy Spirit, who have the same nature, have died, too?’ His position has a striking resemblance to the Christology of the Cappadocian Fathers. But here, then, is a theological loophole once again. The Orthodox party failed to show him that they had no problem with the Cappadocian Fathers and that their theology was compatible with Cyril’s Christology. The story, of course, had a sad end to it. Following the Abuna’s excommunication of Zä-Dīngīl for abandoning the religion of his forefathers, he was defeated and killed by one of the rebel leaders, Zä-Sīllase.

The nobles had other ideas about Zä-Dīngīl’s successor, ranging from abolishing the monarchy altogether, albeit a minority view, to re-naming Yaqob as the new emperor, but their dominance was brought to an abrupt end when the strong-man Susnīyos, who had been a rebel since the death of Särs’ä Dīngīl, seized power and restored the kingship to its former glory before the invasion of Ahmäd Grañ by subjugating the each of the unruly nobles turn by turn.

### 2.2.3. The Debates during the Reign of Susnīyos

Susnīyos’s (1607-1632) name entered the history books as the emperor who caused unprecedented bloodshed and untold suffering among his own people by forcefully declaring Catholicism as the official religion of Ethiopia. This emperor, who was the one and only monarch of Ethiopia to openly embrace Catholicism, had no intention of abandoning Orthodoxy during initial years of his reign. His highly intelligent half-brother, Sī’īlā Krīstos, renowned as an ‘indomitable defender of Orthodoxy and a fitting match to Paez’, was personally engaging in several theological debates held between the Jesuits and the Orthodox over the validity of two natures-and-one person Christology during this period. The emperor tried to maintain impartiality although at heart he was Orthodox through and through.

Since sometimes around 1609, one can say, the emperor became interested in the missionaries because he liked their commitment to order and centralisation, in politics as well as religion, unlike their Orthodox critic who not only were pro-decentralisation but also were key allies of the nobilities alienating the suzerain from the vassals by excommunicating the monarch as they did in the case of his predecessors Yaqob and Zä-Dingil.<sup>46</sup> Sympathy gradually gave way to admiration and in due time Susnīyos secretly accepted into Catholicism (It was ten years later, in March 1622, that the emperor officially received the Eucharist from Paez). After his conversion, Susnīyos privately expressed his ambition to declare Catholicism as the official religion of Ethiopia provided that he received military support from Portugal in case of a possible popular uprising. To this end he sent a letter to Philip III in 1609 and an ambassador, Fiqir İgzi'ı, two years later. We know that his letter went through because he received a reply from Philip (in 1609) and from Pope Paul V (1612), both of them promising him military support and a patriarch in order to back his reforms. The pledge, however, did not materialise. His ambassador, unfortunately, did not manage to leave the country to deliver the message because he was confronted by the people. Set aside the long overdue external support he desperately needed, the emperor did not, at first, have the backing of his own confidants on this matter. The move was seriously opposed by his family in general, and especially by his brother Sı'ılā Krıstos in particular.

The break through, from the perspective of the Roman Catholics, came in the year 1612 when Sı'ılā Krıstos, to the delight of his emperor brother, was converted to Catholicism by Paez. The conversion of Sı'ılā Krıstos, therefore, from dedicated Orthodox to a zealous Catholic, arguably, was one of the great achievements of Paez and, perhaps, tantamount to a turning point in the secular as well as ecclesiastical history of seventeenth century Ethiopia. After changing side to the adherents of two natures, Sı'ılā Krıstos faced the very same problem Pedro Paez had faced before him in understanding the Orthodox logic. It is

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<sup>46</sup> Tesfazghi, *Current Christological Positions*, 61.



highly probable that Paez himself could be present (and active) in this debate which he preserved for us the story in his book *Historia*<sup>47</sup>.

Sī'īlā Krīstos: 'Can you answer me what is meant the Holy Gospel says that Christ our Lord was afraid in the Garden ... and that he prayed that the chalice might pass, that he sweated blood, suffered and died and that he said on the Cross 'My God, my God . . .?' How did he say and suffer all these things, in as much as he was a man or in as much as he is God?'

Monks: 'In as much as he is man'.

Sī'īlā Krīstos: 'Therefore, he has the human nature; not even the divine nature is separated from it after it is united to it'

The monks did not have any problem with the premise of Sī'īlā Krīstos either and readily admitted there are two natures, human and divine, in Christ. Sī'īlā Krīstos's next step was a step too far, according to the monks. He concluded, 'therefore in Christ there are two natures, the divine and the human'. The monks, once again, rejected the argumentation of Sī'īlā Krīstos as fallacious because by reason of the union they are one; no longer two. For Sī'īlā Krīstos, this was an unambiguous case of logical absurdity. In his mind he was satisfied with Ethiopian rejection of Eutyches who confused the natures. What he could not, anymore, envisage was whether the non-Chalcedonian alternative was logically valid and scripturally substantiated.

You uphold two contrary things: that in Christ there is the human nature and the divine nature without confusion and mixture, and that there can only be but one nature. If you intend to say that there is only one Christ, I, too, affirm the same, because he is but one person, but in him there are two perfect natures.'

What seemed a logical absurdity to Sī'īlā Krīstos was the way the Orthodox scholars used the term 'nature.' 'Nature' on the one hand is used to differentiate the constituent parts of the hypostatic union (hence as a safeguard against Eutychians) and on the other hand to describe the result of the union. Sī'īlā Krīstos had no qualms with the unity of (the person) of Christ but he took issue with the appropriateness of the use of the term 'nature' to explain what happened after the union. In other words, he was against equating 'nature' with 'person'. For the Orthodox, first of all, there is no logical absurdity or danger of

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<sup>47</sup> Pedro paez, *História da Etiópia: reprodução do códice coevo inédito da Biblioteca pública de Braga*, Biblioteca histórica de Portugal e Brasil Série ultramarine no. 5 (Porto: Livaria Civilização, (1945-6). The texts are cited from Tesfazghi, *Current Christological Positions*, 60-61.

confusion of natures, because what they understood by ‘one nature’ after the union was an incarnate nature, following Cyril’s famous formula, ‘one incarnate nature of God the Word’ (*Ahati t’äba’iy’i zä-Īgzi’abher Qal zatäsäb’a*). Secondly, Sī’ilä Krīstos’s failure to appreciate the difference between an ‘incarnate nature’ and a ‘single nature’ only reinforces their conviction that theirs was the right path for even Nestorius had the very same problem of understanding Cyril’s concept of one incarnate nature.

Unlike his predecessors’, Susnīyos’s reign was characterised by both internal and external controversies. Until this time the choice was between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. From this time on, the Orthodox Church itself was divided; being Orthodox was no more enough.<sup>48</sup>

### 2.2.4. The Theological Debate during the reign of Fasilädäs

Following the religious civil war, King Susnīyos abdicated the throne to his son Fasilädäs (1632-1667) and returned the Orthodox Faith in the 25<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. Fasilädäs’s reign was characterised by brutal persecution of the missionaries and the ushering of a new phase of internal divisions.<sup>49</sup>

According to Jänbäre Admasu<sup>50</sup>, as soon as Fasilädäs ascended to the throne, the scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox pleaded with the king to convene the Catholics for a theological debate with them so that they will avenge for the blood of their brothers by silencing Alfonso Méndez. The missionaries were called by the king who asked them, ‘why do you seduce people by your corrupt religion?’ Fasilädäs’s hostility to the religion his father held so dearly to such an extent that he had risked his own life as well as throne was very obvious when he called Catholicism a ‘corrupt religion’. No doubt, the missionaries were not welcomed. In any case, the Jesuits bravely replied to the king’s accusation, ‘We did not

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<sup>48</sup> According to Kidanä Wäld Kifle, who was apparently an adherent of *Yäs’ägga Lij Christology*, *Kara Haymanot*, the official Christological position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, was unheard of before the time of this emperor. For detailed discussion, please see below.

<sup>49</sup> Tesfazghi, *Current Christological Positions*, 64.

<sup>50</sup> Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 181.

seduce them but taught them the right way for holiness'. Then the emperor said to them 'then if you have taught the right way, I will bring to you men learned in Sacred Scriptures, and you will dispute with them on religion...' The priests of Däbrä Libanos were called. The dispute was held in Dänqäz and Īč'č'ägge Bätträ Giyorgis<sup>51</sup>, in this case, was the main speaker on the side of the Orthodox. Once again, it seems, the debate was polarised between Catholic foreigners and Orthodox nationals. Although we know that there were many Ethiopian converts to Catholicism, we do not know if they, too, were invited to the Council of Dänqäz, and if they were, in what capacity. According to the emperor, the debate was on religion and, despite the many differences between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, the Orthodox spokesperson Bätträ Giyorgis, without wasting any time, directly raised the Christological problem, another piece of evidence for the central part Christology had in the Ethiopian Church.

Bätträ Giyorgis: Don't you believe that God became man and saved us by his death.

Romans: God did not die, but when the flesh in which God had dwelled (*Hädärä*) died, it is said 'God dying saved us'.

Bätträ Giyorgis: St. Cyril says: 'He died whom death cannot touch in his nature or essence (*bä-Hillawiyähu*).

Roman: I do not accept Cyril for he is like me.<sup>52</sup>

At this juncture, it is interesting to note that as recent as three decades ago, during the reign of Zä-Dīngīl, Pedro Paez had successfully and skilfully used the Theopaschite (the suffering of God), argument to silence his opponents citing Acts 20:28: 'Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood'.<sup>53</sup> This time, however, the missionaries instead of affirming the death of God through Christ, following the example of

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<sup>51</sup> *Īč'č'ägge* is the title given to the abbot of Däbrä Libanos Monastery.

<sup>52</sup> This remark by the Catholic missionary, although literally true (of course Cyril is neither God nor infallible), was naïve at best and offensive at worst. Given Cyril's achievement both in the political and theological fields as well as his place in the Ethiopian Church (along with the other non-Chalcedonian Churches), the Roman should have demonstrated a knowledge of Cyrillian Christology and a respect for his authority. Cyril has established himself as one of the great theological minds of all times. Since the fifth century, Cyril's theology serves as a watershed in the development of Christology. For Cyril's luminous political and theological career, see the discussions in Chapter 1.

<sup>53</sup> See the relevant section above for detailed discussion.

Paez, and driving home, like he did, the unity of the person of Christ and the duality of his natures, flatly rejected the Theopaschite theology. They did not stop there. Alarming, they went ahead and used the Nestorian formula *Hädärä* making a clear distinction between God (i.e. the Logos) and the flesh in which he dwelt (*Hädärä*), to explain the relationship between the divinity and humanity of Christ.<sup>54</sup> Conducting a theological dispute in a language that was at the very least second, if not third or even fourth, in front of a biased king and a hostile observers as well as among a different culture, could have been a frightening experience that might easily affected the missionaries' thinking patterns, however ready they might have been to die for their faith. Even then, using *Hädärä* as their Christological formula was like shooting themselves in the foot and was inexcusable as the non-Chalcedonians have always accused the Roman Church of diluted Nestorianism, which the Catholic Church rightly and firmly denies. As if this was not bad enough, the spokesperson for the missionaries, at their own peril, rejected the authority of Cyril of Alexandria whose letters, along with Pope Leo's Tome, the Council of Chalcedon recognised as the yardstick against which the orthodoxy of past, present or future views of Christ can be measured. Bätträ Giyorgis's response to the Jesuit's lack of appreciation of the Fathers, and by implication the holy tradition, is interesting. He asked 'And do not you accept the books of the Apostles?' What Bätträ Giyorgis had in mind when he was raising this question is difficult to know. It could mean, do you accept the New Testament witness regarding the person of Jesus? But there might be more to it: his question had serious theological implications. His point could have been, aside from showing disregard to tradition, as is evident from your view of the Fathers, do you stop at the Fathers or go all the way in your rejection of tradition by refusing to accept the authority of the Apostles, for Christianity is one Holy Tradition? In reality, from this point on, the Jesuits had lost the plot and their defeat at the hands of the Ethiopian scholars was inevitable. The missionary's reply was an emphatic yes, as one would have expected. 'I do, for they are teachers'. Now the stage was set and Bätträ Giyorgis began showering a chain of proof texts, one after the other, from the New Testament that he believed would affirm that Christ is one. The notion of the unity of Christ was confessed in the Nicene Creed ('the same He') and was acknowledged by Paez as well as his Ethiopian disciple Sī'īlā Krīstos, in the previous

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<sup>54</sup> Tesfazghi, *Current Christological Positions*, 65.

debates. The divisive point, both at the time of the Council of Chalcedon as well as the many disputes Ethiopian monks had with missionaries, was the existence of two natures in Christ after the union. The passages employed by Bätträ Giyorgis, as we soon shall see, do not conclusively rule out the existence of two natures in Christ after the union while, of course, certainly prove that there is but only one Christ. Again the missionaries let the opportunity to make their point slip through their fingers by failing to come up with other passages that deal with the natures of Christ, as did Sī'ilä Krīstos and Paez not long before.

Bätträ Giyorgis used two complimentary Scriptural passages to prove his point. Rom. 5:10 says 'For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...' (RSV). Bätträ Giyorgis asked, was this text about God, who is the Son of God, or about his flesh? In other words, by whose death were we reconciled to God? Can we say by the death of God (who is the God-man, for there exists only one nature after the union) or do we say by the death of the flesh (whom God assumed since God, by his nature, is impassible)? In its polished form, what Bätträ Giyorgis was asking was who is the subject of the incarnation? He answered his own question: 'it was God who became man' (*Amlak zä-konnä Säbī'a*) that died for us. How is this possible? Bätträ Giyorgis argued that God died in the flesh and the flesh gained immortality because of its union with the divinity, by citing 1Pet. 3:18: 'For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit' (RSV). The second proof text used by Bätträ Giyorgis was 1 Jn. 1:1-2 in conjunction with Jn. 8:58. The former reads as follows.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life; the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us ... (RSV)

And the later, 'I was before Abraham was born'. Bätträ Giyorgis, asks his rhetorical question, again. 'Who is from the beginning and who is that that was touched?' All along his motif was the same; namely, who is the subject of the incarnation? It is not that difficult to follow his logic. To put it differently, Bätträ Giyorgis' point was, essentially, if 'That which was from the beginning' (*ho ēn ap archēs*) of 1 Jn. 1:1 is an allusion to the '*En archē ēn ho Logos*' of Jn. 1:1 (which, of course, it is), then the one that was seen, touched and

heard by the apostles was none other than the eternal Logos made man himself. Christ was eternally with his Father as the Son of God before his birth from Mary for Jesus ‘was before Abraham was born’. In the words of the Nicene Creed (in which, in its Ge’ez and Amharic versions, Bätträ Giyorgis would, obviously, be well-versed), it was the ‘Same He’ who was with the Father from eternity as God that became the object of scrutiny by our sensory organs as man.

The missionaries were cornered and defeated. Orthodoxy had already been reinstated by the now deposed king who was responsible, primarily, for the resultant chaos and massacre following the forcible imposition of the Catholic faith and the demands of the new Church that undermined the very fabric of the age-old Christian culture of the Ethiopian highland.<sup>55</sup> Sadly, it is not unfair to say that at this stage the Orthodox hated the Jesuits more than they hated the Muslims whom the Portuguese help defeat.<sup>56</sup> With regard to the Catholicism, intolerance had taken the place of dialogue and debate. The wide open door for Jesuit missionary activities, which they enjoyed in the reigns of successive emperors and which reached its zenith under Susnīyos, was now finally and completely closed. Victory, vengeance and jubilation were the mood of the day for the die-hard Orthodox. From this time on, not only did Catholicism cease to be a threat for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church but its good reputation was irrevocably tarnished to such an extent that it was a stigma to be a Catholic.<sup>57</sup> For the losers a new era of doom had dawned. Out of fear of Portuguese

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<sup>55</sup> Owing, partly, to Semitic influences, Ethiopians practice circumcision, follow the Jewish dietary laws and observe both Saturday and Sunday as Sabbath. Furthermore, the Orthodox Christians regularly fast Wednesdays and Fridays in addition to the major fasting seasons such as the Lent. The Roman Church, impudently, forbade all of them and, in the minds of the Ethiopians the sanction was regarded as a sacrilege.

<sup>56</sup> Ironically, one of Fasil’s strategies to avert Portuguese invasion was to initiate a friendly relationship with the neighbouring Muslim countries to help him stop any Europeans from coming to Ethiopia. Cf. Merid & Girma, *Luso-Ethio Relations*, 105-106.

<sup>57</sup> Even though the Roman Catholic Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are not in full communion to this date, there is, however, a mutual respect and recognition between the Churches. On the level of the ordinary people, however, things are much different. To this day, the use of the

invasion, and with the pretext of protecting its citizens, all the missionaries except one, who was too old to travel, were ordered to leave the country at once by the new emperor. Those who failed to comply were severely punished and/or executed.<sup>58</sup> Some acted in accordance with the wishes of the emperor and began their frantic journey home voluntarily. But they were not safe from the impending danger. Those who were lucky enough to evade the mob, of fanatics, were robbed on the way by the bandits. Disenchanted, they returned to the place they had called 'home' before setting out to Ethiopia, but there was very little sympathy for what they had been through. Very few believed their version of the Ethiopians and, for the most part, they were rather wrongfully blamed for the failed mission.<sup>59</sup> The persecution that began in 1633 went on until 1650 when the last Jesuit remaining in the country was executed by hanging.<sup>60</sup>

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word 'Catholic' together with 'Arian' as synonymous to evil, cruelty and betrayal is a common practice among the less educated members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

<sup>58</sup> Merid and Girma, *Luso-Ethiopian Relations*, 103-104.

<sup>59</sup> Merid & Girma, *Luso-Ethiopian Relations*, 105.

<sup>60</sup> Bolotow cited by Tesfazghi, *Ceurrent Christological Positions*, 66, no. 48.

**CHAPTER 3:**  
**ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY DISPUTED:**  
**THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGICAL**  
**SCHOOLS IN ETHIOPIA**

There is a general consensus among scholars that the dispute over the meaning and significance of the anointment of Jesus by the Holy Spirit was closely linked to, if not caused by, the arrival of the Jesuits in Ethiopia.<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, the Jesuits were not responsible for the introduction of the subject matter to Ethiopia in the first place, but their presence, however, provided impetus for the explosion of the latent theological time-bomb. Hence Grillmeier,

It is true that this topic (i.e. anointment) did not become acute in Ethiopia until the seventeenth century, and then in such a way that the result was the formation of theological schools that were mutually and fiercely combatant. Its introduction into Ethiopian tradition, however, lies significantly earlier and can be demonstrably placed in the period around 500-525, even if it did not become fully appreciated at the time.<sup>2</sup>

The Ethiopian Church is no stranger to internal divisions: throughout its long history, it has survived several disputes and divisions. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of the Oriental Orthodox Churches that parted company from the rest of Christendom (with the other four sister Churches of Alexandria, Syria, Armenia and India) rejecting the Christology of the Chalcedonian Definition Faith and protesting against its disciplinary

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Getatchew Haile, *The Faith of the Uncionists in the Ethiopian Church* (Haymanot Mäs'ihawit), (Lovanii: Peeters, 1990), VIII; Ayyälä Täklä Haymanot (Abba), *Ya-ityop'ya Betä Kirstyan silä Kirstos Bahriyat Akalawi Täwahido yamitamnäw Tīmhirt* (Asmara: P'et'ros Sila, 1958), 113; Tesfazghi Uqbit, *Current Christological Positions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Theologians* (Rome: Pontificate Institutum Studiorum Orientalum, 1973), 50; Admasu Jänbäre (Mälkä Bīrhan), *Mäddlotä Amin: Yāhaymanot Mizan* (Addis Ababa: Tīnsa'e- Zäguba'e Press, 1997), 179; Donald Crummey, *Priests and Politicians: Protestant and Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia 1830-1868* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 15. Merid Wolde Aregay, *Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom 1508-1708, with Special Reference to the Galla Migrations and their Consequences*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1971).3, 4; I. Guidi, 'La Chiesa Abissina', *Oriente Moderno*, ii (1922-3), 123-128, 186-190 and 252-256; Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia (1855-1974)* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Grillmeier, *The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia*, 341.



decisions, especially excommunicating Dioscorus of Alexandria, the successor of Cyril of Alexandria to the Markan See. Thanks to the works of the *S'adqan*, the essence of the Christological controversy of the fourth and fifth centuries, the proponents of the various positions and the dignitaries behind the warring parties who lent support and protection are well known in Ethiopia as early as the sixth century, if not earlier than that. Until the arrival of the Jesuits, the Chalcedonian faith was presented negatively and rejected automatically.

From the time of Emperors Gälawdewos to that of Susīnīyos, theological debates were highly polarised between the Catholic missionaries (foreigners) and the Orthodox priests (Ethiopians). Emperor Susīnīyos' abandonment of Orthodox Christianity in favour of Roman Catholicism ushered in a new era in the history of the theological debates in more ways than one: firstly, Chalcedonian Christology that had been resisted for centuries in Ethiopia had now been enthusiastically embraced by several Ethiopian nationals, a number of whom took an active part in some of these debates. Secondly, this period witnessed the beginning of the fragmentation of the national Church and the emergence of schools of thought or traditions (*bahil*) that are opposed to each other. These groups or traditions, all of whom preferred to be called by the title *Tāwahido* and claimed to be the authentic representative and heir of Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy, nevertheless, came to be known by the pejorative nick-name which their opponents assigned to them as *Karra Haymanot*, *Yās'ägga Lij* and *Qibat*.

Two important qualifiers should be made about these Ethiopian Christological traditions from the outset and before we proceed to discuss each one of them in detail. First, Ethiopian scholars, regardless of their theological persuasion, had always been clear that whilst they were irreconcilably divided in their interpretation of Cyrillian Christology, they were united in firmly rejecting the Chalcedonian Christology of two natures in one person. In other words, even though the Jesuit presence was regarded as the main reason for the evolution of the three theological traditions in Ethiopia, the controversy amongst them was not the acceptance of Western Christology. It was, rather, about establishing the authentic representation of Cyrillo-Alexandrian Orthodoxy. The Capuchin missionary Cardinal Massaja, for example, believed that one of the three groups, *Sost Lidät*, was Catholicism

except in name.<sup>3</sup> His view was upheld by D’Abbadie, but Blondeel argued *Qibat* is closer to Catholicism than was *Sost Lüdät*.<sup>4</sup> This assertion, however, is contested by Ethiopian scholars. Admasu, among many, was at pains to make sure that this point is crystal clear in the minds of his readers.

አሁን በዚህ አንቀጽ የነጻገሌ ባህል ይህ ነው የነጻገሌ ባህል እንደዚህ ነው ብሎ የ፫ቱንም ባህል ባጭሩ ለመግለጽ ያሳሰበኝ ኹሉም በየበኩላቸው የኹሉት ባሕርይን ባህል ተቃዋሚዎች መኾናቸውን ለመግለጽ ነው እንጂ የተቀብዐን ሚስጥር ለካቶሊካውያን ለመግለጽ ብየ አይደለም<sup>5</sup>

My motivation to briefly explain the stances of all the three traditions was not to explain to the Catholics the mystery of the anointment of Jesus but to show that each one of them is an opponent of the two natures (i.e. Chalcedonian) tradition.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, despite the bitter disagreements, the national Church remained unified. That is to say the Church was internally divided whilst remaining externally united. At no time in the history of the Ethiopian Church, therefore, had one or more of the factions broken away from the mother Church. What we see is that each group, depending on the particular brand of theology endorsed by the successive emperors, which in turn, in most cases, preconditioned the respective regional affiliation of the monarchs, had their chance to be the official position of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Täwahido* Church.

There are competing hypotheses, written and oral, regarding the time of and the reason for the emergence of these groups. The rival theories, even so, share some features in common. All of them make the missionary factor, directly or indirectly, responsible for the crisis. Furthermore, all agree that the seeds of discord were sown at the eleventh hour before the prohibition of foreign missions from the country and blame a certain outsider, known in Ethiopia as Mä’alim P’et’ros, for causing the division.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> G. Massaja, *I miei trentacinque anni nell’alta ethiopia. memorie storiche di fra guglielmo massaja* (Rome. 12 volumes, 1885-1895), I, 116-117.

<sup>4</sup> Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 75.

<sup>5</sup> Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 182.

<sup>6</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>7</sup> Mä’alim is an Arabic word for ‘doctor’ or ‘teacher’.

The exact identity of Mä'alīm P'et'ros, however, has been debated. Some believe it is a reference to Peter Heyling, a German Lutheran from Lübeck who came to Ethiopia as a missionary via Cairo around 1633.<sup>8</sup> Those who hold this view rely on the Ethiopian Royal Chronicle that delays the beginning of the debate to the much later date of the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of the reign of Fasil (i.e. 1654) and, incidentally, the time coincides with the ministry of Heyling in Ethiopia. Admasu argues Mä'alīm P'et'ros cannot be the protestant missionary Peter Heyling for the simple reason that protestants are not interested in deep theological issues such as the incarnation; and rather invest their energy preaching 'believe and be saved' gospel or teaching against trivialities such as the veneration of icons and the intercession of saints.<sup>9</sup> Coincidentally, even though his Protestant Christology was practically identical with Catholic Christology, it was because of his Mariology, objection to giving reverence to the Marian icon, rather than his Christology that Peter Heyling was expelled from Ethiopia and tragically murdered by the Turks on his way to his country of origin. Admasu's observation seems to us remarkably plausible.

Ayyälä also rules out any suggestion of equating Mä'alīm P'et'ros with Peter Heyling. Based on D'Abbadie's diary, Ayyälä maintains that the descriptions of Mä'alīm P'et'ros best fits the Spaniard Pedro Paez rather than German Peter Heyling.<sup>10</sup>

ስሙ ሙዓሊም ጴጥሮስ የተባለ ሰው ከኢየሩሳሌም ወደኛ መጣ። ጤሙ እንደእሳት ነዳጅ በጣም ቀይ ነበር፤ እርሱ ቁስ ነኝ ይል ነበር፤ በእውነትም ቁስ መሆኑ በመልካም አካሄዱ ይታወቅ ነበር። ግእዝ ይናገር፤ ያገራችንም መጻሕፍት ሁሉና የሃይማኖትን ነገር ከበለጡት ሊቃውንቶቻችን ይልቅ ያውቃቸው ነበር። ታላላቅ ሹማዎት፣ ወይዛራዝር፣ ባላገሮች፣ መኳንንቶች፣ ወታደሮች፣ መምህራን፣ ባሕታውያን ሁሉ አዚም እንደተደረገበት ተስበው ወደ ትምህርቱ ተሰብስበው ይመጡ ነበር። ንግግሩ እንደእሳት ነበረ። . . . ቤተ ክህነት በክርክር ሊያሸንፉት ሰላልቻሉ በእርሱ ላይ ሁከትን አስነስተው አባረሩት።

<sup>8</sup> For the life and missionary activities of Peter Heyling, cf. O. F. A. Meinardus, 'Peter Heyling, History and Legend', *Ostkirchliche Studien*, cxli (1965), 305-326. Also cf., Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 188.

<sup>10</sup> A. D' Abbadie's *Douze ans dans la haute Ethiopie*, 215-219. Admasu uncharacteristically refrained from commenting on Ayele's view on this point and, instead, offered an alternative oral history. This may be because Ayele got his story from D'Abbadie who gathered the stories from ordinary people in Ethiopia during his residence there rather than asking the experts whom he could have easily accessed given his status. Admasu, rightly in our view, strongly disapproves this practice as it distorts the facts and does injustice to Ethiopian way of life and religion.

Someone whose name was Mu'alim P'et'ros came to us from Jerusalem. His beard was red like a flame (t'imu indä'isat nädaj bät'am qäy näbbär). He used to say he was ordained and, indeed, it was obvious from his exemplary life style that he was a priest. He used to speak Ge'ez and used to know our manuscripts and religious issues better than most of the scholars. Government officials, ladies, peasants, royals, soldiers, teachers, even the hermits had been flocking to his sessions as if bewitched. His speech was fiery. The Church executives spurred riots against him and expelled him from the country.

The problem with this narrative is that it merges the story of two European missionaries to Ethiopia who shared the same name, Peter, by mere coincidence, but who never met because the times at which they lived were far apart. Paez was much liked by everyone, had a very fruitful ministry culminating in the monarch's conversion to Catholicism, and was not removed from the country. On the contrary, he was given a state funeral and was mourned by many when he died. Heyling, on the other hand, was expelled from the country and suffered martyrdom *en route* home. The mix-up aside, Ayyälä believes both narratives are true and complementary to each other in the sense that whilst the presence of and encounter with the Jesuit missionaries, especially Pedro Paez, was the reason for the emergence of the three schools of thought, yet the debates were intensified when Peter Heyling was operative in Ethiopia.<sup>11</sup>

Coming to the two stories about the origin of the Christological traditions in Ethiopia, the first one narrates that Mä'alim P'et'ros shrewdly picked two of his disciples, Qorānč' Täklä Haymanot and Sank<sup>w</sup>a Ewost'atewos, named after the two great 13<sup>th</sup>-century monastic leaders. For the first, he deliberately told him that Christ became 'Son by grace through the anointing of the Holy Spirit' (*bä-qibat yä-s'ägga Lij*<sup>12</sup>). Qorānč' Täklä Haymanot then spread this teaching, but posterity confused him with the saint and founder of the Däbrä Libanos Monastery, the Abba Täklä Haymanot. This way Däbrä Libanos came to be associated with this strand of Christology. Likewise, Sank<sup>w</sup>a Ewost'atewos passed on to

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<sup>11</sup> For example cf. Tesfazghi, *Christological Positions*, 67; Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 188; Ayele, *Yä-Ityop'ya Betä KIRSTIYAN*, 142.

<sup>12</sup> *Bäqibat Yäs'ägga Lij* (Literal meaning=Son by/of Grace). Adam was created sinless and the clause 'son by grace' was employed to show the perfect relationship he had with God before it was stained by sin. *Yäs'ägga Lijočč* argue that this state of being in perfect and harmonious relationship with the Creator, which Adam and the whole human race lost was re-gained by Christ through the anointment of the Holy Spirit so that, like Adam, he would be a 'firstborn' to us. Both *Qibat* and *Yäs'ägga Lij* Christologies are *Sost Lüdät* (Three-birth) theologies.

others the theology he received from P'et'ros – Christ ‘became Son by nature’ by the anointment of the Holy Spirit (*bä-qibat Mänfäs Qiddus yäbahrïy lij honä*<sup>13</sup>) – and his doctrine was attributed to the Däbrä Bizän monastery which was founded by Abba Ewost'atewos.

In the second version, although Mä'alīm P'et'ros was regarded as the originator of the problem, he neither did it intentionally nor knew anything about the consequent division among the nationals after he left. According to this version, when Mä'alīm was evicted from the country, in frustration and anger he blurted out at his escorts that these ignorant Orthodox priests would not know the answer if they were asked what happened to Christ after receiving the Spirit, since it was written several times in the Scripture that he received the Spirit. The convoy brought back the report to Emperor Fasil, who, for the sake of curiosity, gathered the scholars of the Church and asked them what did the anointment of Jesus by the Holy Spirit achieve? One group replied he became Son by grace (*Yäs 'ägga Lij honä*) while the other group affirmed he became Son by nature (*yäbahrïy Lij honä*). Those who claimed that the reception of the Spirit had no significance for Christ *per se*, but was done for us (for our example as well as salvation) and on our behalf, just like his baptism, suffering and death, came to be known as *Täwahido*. Another scholar, Täklä Mariam believes that it was Alfonso Mendez rather than Pedro Paez who taught the above stories to his disciples when he was deported.<sup>14</sup> With regard to the year of his eviction, Täklä Mariam proposes two dates, 1618 at the earliest or 1626 at the latest. To his credit, he has successfully corrected the significant historical error that wrongly portrayed Paez as thrown out of Ethiopia. However, he falls into another fallacy by affirming that Fasil became king in 1626.

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<sup>13</sup> Literal translation of the formula “*bäqibat Mänfäs Qiddus yäbahrïy lij honä*” would be something like ‘he became Son by nature by the anointing of the Holy Spirit’. What was intended to convey by this formula was that the human nature of Christ, though united with his divinity, it needed the anointing work of the Holy Spirit to be appropriated and glorified by the eternal Word to be the body of God. For a detailed discussion of the Christology of *Qibat*, see below.

<sup>14</sup> Täklä Mariam M. M., *Ya-İtyop'ya Betä KIRSTYAN KIRSTOS and Akal and Bahrïy indähonä yämitamnäw Haymanot* (Addis Ababa: Tinsa'e Zäguba'e, 1960), 128-129.

While *Qibat*, *Karra* and *Yäs'ägga Lij* theologies continue to be the major Christological traditions maintained in Ethiopia, their respective teachings, inevitably, have over time undergone some changes and refinements. All parties prefer to be addressed as *Täwahido*<sup>15</sup> and claim to be from antiquity even though it was *Karra Haymanot* that came to be known by that name after its crucial and final victory over its opponents at the Council of Borumeda in 1878.<sup>16</sup> We now turn our attention to the theology and history of each of these traditions.

#### 3.1. *Qibi'at*

Linguistically, the term is derived from the Ge'ez verb '*qäbi'a*' to 'anoint'. '*Qibi'at*', which also can be spelt as '*Qibat*', is the noun form of '*qäbi'a*' that means anointing, anointment, unction, Chrism.<sup>17</sup> Theologically, the adherents of *Qibat* argue that Christ needed the anointing work of the Holy Spirit to be the natural Son of God and for the perfect union of his two natures; divine and human.<sup>18</sup> They adopted "[Christ] became the Son of God by the unction of the Holy spirit" (*bä-Qibat Wäldä A'ab*) as their Christological formula. Admasu, one of the best theological minds of his time, was immensely capable of providing us with a full-fledged treatment of the subject had it not been for his defensive approach because of his suspicion of Abba Ayyälä's motive for publishing his book, namely causing division

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<sup>15</sup>The literature describes both *Karra Haymanot* and *Yäs'ägga Lij* as *Täwahido* while *Yäs'ägga Lij* and *Qibat* are also merged as *Sost Lidät*. For the former see Kidanä Wäld Kifle, *Mäs'hafä Säwasiw wä-Gis wä-Mäzgäbä Qalat Hades* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1956), 384 and for the latter case see Alämayyāhu Mogäs Dārāso, *And İräñña And Mānga* (Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, 1997), 27-28. For the sake of clarity, therefore, we refrain from using the terms '*Täwahido*' and '*Sost Lidät*' and stick to '*Karra Haymanot*', '*Yäs'ägga Lij*' and '*Qibat*' terminologies.

<sup>16</sup> For the discussion of the theology and proceedings of the Council of Borumeda, see below.

<sup>17</sup> Wolf Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classic Ethiopic): Ge'ez-English/ English-Ge'ez with an index of the Semitic roots* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), 418.

<sup>18</sup> Getatchew Haile, 'Materials on the theology of Qeb'at or Unction' in: G. Goldenberg & B. Podolsky, (eds.), *Ethiopian Studies. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference, Tel Aviv 1980* (Rotterdam: A.A.: Balkema, 1986), pp. 205-250.

and strife within the Church with the view of achieving what the Jesuits and other Catholic missionaries failed to do.<sup>19</sup> Still, with his understandable reservation, his book, arguably, is an outstanding work on the subject.

እርስዎ ንጃሚዎችና ትግሮች እያሉ የሚጠሩዎቸው ቅብዑቶች የሚባሉት ወገኖችም ቃል ሥጋን በተዋሐደ ጊዜ በተዋሐደ ምንታዊ ጠፋ አንድ አካል አንድ ባሕርይ ኾነ ሲዋሐድ መንፈስ ቅዱስን ተቀብሎ የባሕርይ ልጅ ኾነ መንፈስ ቅዱስን በመቀበሉ ንዴት ጠፋለት ይላሉ እንጂ እንደ ካቶሊክ ባህል ባንድ አካል ኹለት ባሕርይ አይሉም።<sup>20</sup>

Those unctionists (*Qība'atočč*), whom you described as ‘*Godjamese*’ and ‘*Tigreans*’, do say that when the Word was united with the flesh, duality disappeared because of the union; he became one person one nature; At the moment of the union (*siwahad*), he became the ontological Son (i.e. *yābahriy Lij*) after receiving the Holy Spirit [and] because he had received the Holy Spirit, poverty [from the flesh he assumed] vanished. But they never say two natures in one person like the Catholic tradition.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, another Ethiopian scholar, Alāmāyyāhu, gave us a brief but very helpful synopsis of the Christology of *Qibat* by comparing and contrasting it with the Christology of *Karra Haymanot*, the champions of *Hulätt Lidät* (Two-births), the officially sanctioned position of the Church. We shall not, at this stage, touch upon the Christological teaching of *Karra Haymanot*.<sup>22</sup>

ቅባቶች የወልድ ልደታት ሦስት እንደሆኑ ያስተምራሉ፤ እምቅድመ ዓለም ከአብ ያለእናት የተወለደው አንድ ልደት፤ ከቅድስት ድንግል ማርያም ማኅፀን ከመንፈስ ቅዱስ የተወለደው ሁለተኛ ልደት፤ ከእመቤታችን ሥጋን ለብሶ በኢየሩሳሌም የተወለደው ሦስተኛ ልደት ብለው፤ አምነው ያስተምራሉ። በዚህም ሦስት ልደት በማለታቸው ከካራ እምነት ይለያያሉ። እንዴት? ቢሉ፤ ካሮች እምቅድመ ዓለም ካብ ያለእናት፤ አንድ ልደት፤ ድኅረ ዓለም ከእመቤታችን ያላባት ሁለት ልደት፤ ወልደ አብ ወልደ ማርያም በተዋሐደ ከበረ ሲሉ፤ ቅባቶች ግን ከካሮች ሁለት ልደት ላይ ሦስተኛ ልደት ጨምረው ከመንፈስ ቅዱስ በማኅፀን ማርያም ተወልዷል ይላሉ።<sup>23</sup>

The adherents of *Qibat* believe and teach that the Son had three births: his birth without a mother in eternity past is one; his birth from the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Holy Virgin Mary is the second birth; his physical birth in Jerusalem after taking flesh from our Lady is the third birth. Therefore, because they believe in three births they differ from *Karra* faith. If one asks how? The followers of *Karra* say his birth from the Father without a mother before the creation of the world was his first birth; his birth from Our Lady, without a father, after the creation of the world was his second birth. Whilst [*Karra*] say the Son of

<sup>19</sup> Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 182-183.

<sup>20</sup> Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 182.

<sup>21</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>22</sup> For a full treatment of the Christology of *Karra Haymanot* (or *Hulätt Lidät*) see below.

<sup>23</sup> Alāmāyyāhu, *And İräñña*, 26-27.

the Father and the Son of Mary was glorified by the union, *Qibat* add a third birth on top of *Karra* and say he was born from the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.<sup>24</sup>

ቅባቶች ከካሮች የሚለዩበትን እምነት ባጭሩ ስንመለከተው ፍሬ ነገሩ እንደሚከተለው ይሆናል፤ የሥጋና የቃል መዋሐድ ምንታዊነትን (ሁለትነትን) አጠፋ እንጂ፤ ቃል ለለበሰው ሥጋ የባሕርይ አምላካነትን ክብር ሰጥቶ ያከበረ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ነው። በዚህም አብ ቀባዒ ወልድ ተቀባዒ፤ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ቅብ ናቸው። ምንም መንፈስ ቅዱስን በመቀባት ወልድ ከመንፈስ ቅዱስ ተወልዷል ቢባልም ልደቱ የባሕርይ እንጂ የጸጋ ልደት አይደለም ብለው ያስተምራሉ።<sup>25</sup>

When we look briefly at the difference between the faith of *Qibatočč* and *Karročč* the following are the main points: The [hypostatic] union between the flesh and the Word eliminated duality [of natures] but it was the Holy Spirit who glorified the humanity [of Christ] and gave him the status of God by nature (*yä-bahriy Amlak*). And because of this, God is the anointer, the Son is the anointed one [and] the Holy Spirit is the ointment (or unction). They teach that even though the Son said to be begotten from the Holy Spirit by virtue of being anointed by the Spirit, his birth [from the Spirit] is ontological (*yäbahriy*) rather than grace (*yäs 'ägga lidät*).<sup>26</sup>

Accordingly, the adherents of *Qibat* believe that because of the union of the Word with humanity duality has vanished. One cannot speak of his divinity in isolation from humanity and vice versa. That does not mean either his divinity or humanity was compromised. It means that after the incarnation Christ is but one.<sup>27</sup> The humanity which was assumed by the eternal Word, nonetheless, was imperfect until it was anointed by the Spirit. The Ge'ez term the followers of *Qibat* chose to describe the frailty and limitation of the humanity of Christ is *nīdet* which could be translated into Amharic as *mädähyet* (to be impoverished), *dihnnät* (poverty), *čiggar* (starvation), *it'ot* (deprivation), *hasar* (suffering) and *wīrdet* (humiliation).<sup>28</sup> It echoes the self-emptying act or making oneself nothing (Greek = *kenosis*) of the eternal Word at the point of the incarnation by assuming the creaturely form

<sup>24</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>25</sup> *Alämayyāhu, And Īrāñña*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>27</sup> Contra Chalcedon (two natures in one person after the union) and contra Nestorius (two natures and two corresponding persons after the union).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgbä Qalat*, 628... The association of the incarnation with 'poverty' is also used by Paul in 2 Cor. 8:9: 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich'. RSV.



of a human being as depicted by Paul in Philippians 2:7.<sup>29</sup> By the anointing work of the Holy Spirit this corruptible humanity which the Son of God took from his mother was deified to be the body of God. In other words, the Word appropriated (not absorbed) and deified the body he came to dwell in as his own body.<sup>30</sup> This subsequent work of the Holy Spirit, following his inception by the mysterious divine work of the same Spirit, is portrayed as a ‘third birth’ from the Holy Spirit; the first being his eternal generation from God the Father and the second his physical birth from the Virgin Mary. His birth from the Holy Spirit, however, is clearly distinguished from the other two births. While the first two are real or ontological, the third one is symbolic. That is to say his anointment by the Spirit in the womb of Mary is conveyed by the imagery of birth following the biblical precedent of equating the resurrection of Jesus with a birth (Acts 13:33: ‘*This he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, ‘Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee’.*’). *Qibatočč* seem to be careful not to put on a par his ‘third birth’ from the Holy Spirit with his first birth from the Father or second birth from Mary.<sup>31</sup> While Christ is confessed as the Son of the Father (*Wäldä'ab*) because of his eternal generation and the son of Mary (*Wäldä Mariyam*) because of his natural birth from her, hence Son of God and Son of Mary (*Wäldä'ab Wäldä Mariyam*), they never called Christ

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Kidanä Wäld Kifle, *Haymanotä Abäw Qäddämt (La foi des Pères anciens)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1986), 109. The association of the incarnation with ‘poverty’ is also used by Paul in 2 Cor. 8:9.

<sup>30</sup> Absorption is a Eutychian Christology that has been unequivocally rejected and condemned by the Ethiopian Church. None of the Christological factions that arose in the 16<sup>th</sup> century have any association with it even though it is undeniable that the Christological perceptions of the vast majority of the ordinary members of the Church is unadulterated Eutychianism.

<sup>31</sup> We have indicated elsewhere in this thesis that both the followers of *Qibat* and *Yäs'ägga Lij* subscribe to the doctrine of three births (*Sost Lidät*), of course, with their own variants. There is at least one instance where the third birth of Christ was confused with the two births (eternal and physical) by the adherents of *Sost Lidät* Christology, this time that of *Yäs'ägga Lij* branch, that led to a very serious theological error of confessing Christ as the Son of the Trinity. The scandal happened at the Borumeda Council and the culprits were punished severely. This could be an isolated case or prevalent theological fallacy among the *Sost Lidät* followers in general (thus including *Qibatočč*) or limited to the *S'ägga* sect. For details, see below on the section on the Borumeda Council.

the Son of the Holy Spirit (*Wäldä Mänfäs Qiddus*). His ‘third birth’, they admit, is qualitatively different from the other two births. To appreciate this distinction they coined the term *yägibir Lidät* (functional birth).

Each person of the Trinity has played a distinct role in the process: God the Father anointed the Son by the Holy Spirit. Each person, therefore, respectively fulfils the roles of the anointer (*qäba’i*), the anointed one (*täqäba’i*) and the unction (*Qib*). It follows from this that this group share the view that God the Father is the anointer (*qäba’i*), the Son is the anointed (*täqäba’i*) and the Holy Spirit is the ointment (*qibu’i*) with the *Yäs’ägga Lij* sect. Its distinctiveness lies not so much in its *Sost Lidät* theology but on its *raison d’être*. This is a typically Alexandrian Christology that speaks of Christ as one divine Word with his flesh.<sup>32</sup>

The above explication can, perhaps, be regarded as the ‘classic’ expression of *Qibat* but their Christology has undergone some changes through time. What identifies the various developments as essentially belonging to the same *Qibat* tradition is the acceptance of the common denominator that *Kirstos bäqibat yäbahriy lij honä* (Christ became son by nature through the anointing of the Holy Spirit). Three periods are especially important for the development of their doctrine: the time of Fasil (1632-1667) is generally regarded as the first wave of the movement; its classic form was developed during the reign of Yohannis I (1667-1682); and there was a further development during the era of Tewodros II (1855-1868). Zä-Iyyäsus the blind (*İwwir Zä-Iyyäsus*) and friends, who are believed to be the founders of the movement during the reign of Fasil, held an extreme view of kenotic Christology.<sup>33</sup> At the point of the incarnation, as a direct result of the hypostatic union, they

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<sup>32</sup> This is a testimony to the fact that the Christology of *Qibat* is decidedly Alexandrian orthodoxy. Cf. Stuart Hall, *Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church* (London: SPCK, 1991), 233.

<sup>33</sup> We are not using the term in its nineteenth century sense as a view of Christ held, for example, by the British theologian P. T. Forsyth and the German theologian Gottfried Thomasius. Kenotic Christologies, of one kind or another, attempt to address the logical impasse one would arrive at in dealing with the incarnation of the Word. How could, for example, Jesus be an omnipresent God when he could only be in one place at a time because of the physical constraint of having a body? In what sense, if any, did he possess the divine attribute of omnipresence while he was on earth? Cf. Millard J. Erickson, *The Word became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand

argue, the eternal Word voluntarily set aside or gave up his divine glory as the Scripture says ‘He made himself empty’ (Phil. 2:7, the voluntary self-emptying or *kenosis* of the Word being their main Scriptural proof). But when he was anointed by the Holy Spirit not only did the eternal Word regain the pre-incarnation glory he lost but also clothed the humanity he assumed with the same divine glory. The result was that Christ became Son by nature.

መዝሙሪያ በፋሲል ዘመን የተነሱት እነዘኢየሱስ መጽሐፍ አንደኛ ርእሰ ይላልና ቃል በተዋሕዶ ዜገ፤ ከሥጋ ሲዋሐድ የባሕርይ ክብሩን ዐጣ፤ ለቀቀ፤ ሲቀባ ወደ ጥንተ ክብሩ ተመልሶ በሰውነቱም በአምላክነቱም አንድ ወገን በቅባት የባሕርይ ልጅ ሾነ ብለዋል። ሚስጥሩ እንደበትረ ሙሴ ማለት ነው፤ ሚጦትንና ውላጤን ባንድነት ያሳያል።

First, Zä-Iyyäsus and friends, who came to prominence during the reign of Fasil, said since the Scripture says ‘He made himself poor’ (*Andäye ri’iso*) the Word became poor (*zegä*) because of the union (*bä-Täwahido*), lost his ontological glory (*yä-bahräy kibrun*), surrendered it; but when he was anointed he was returned to his former status (glory) and became the ontological Son both in his flesh as well as divinity. The secret [of this position] is like Moses’ rod: it shows change (*wilat’t’e*) and restoration (*mit’ät*) at once.<sup>34</sup>

Kiflä Giyorgis, the master of Kidanä Wäld Kifle, had preserved the proceedings of the council in which *Qibat* Zä-Iyyäsus and friends took part against the Däbrä Libanese counterparts. The debate was held during the reign of Fasil, possibly in his presence but the exact location and time was not specified. Adam was the spokesperson the Däbrä Libanosite theologians and the *Qibat* scholars, whom the chronicler grudgingly described as ‘others’ (*leločč*) were represented by Zä-Iyyäsus. According to the Royal chronicler, the impetus for the emergence of the first phase of *Qibat* was their disenchantment with the Däbrä Libanos scholars’ handling of the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

በፋሲል መንግሥት ሌሎች በቅባት የባሕርይ ልጅ ብለው ተነሡ የተነሡበትም ምክንያት እንዲህ ነው። ደብረ ሊባኖሶች ቃል ከሥጋ ጋር በተዋሐደ ጊዜ ሥጋን አምላክ የባሕርይ ልጅ አደረገው በዚህ ተዋሕዶ ቃል በሥጋ ተቀባ ጸጋ ተቀበለ ቢሉ ሩቅ ብእሲ የሚያሰኝ መሰላቸው ተረፈ አፍርንጅ ነው

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Rapids: Baker, 1991), 80. The kenosis motif, on the other hand, has been part of the biblical and patristic thoughts throughout the centuries. Along with the Johannine notion of enfleshment (Jn.1:14), the Pauline concept of kenosis (Phil. 2:7) has been the bedrock of Cyril’s Christology. Cf. Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 41. Since Cyril is regarded as a teacher par excellence among the Ethiopians (see Ch.1 for details), the kenosis theme would surface time and again in Ethiopian Christology.

<sup>34</sup>Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgäbä Qalat*, 780.

አሉ። በንጉሥ ፊት ጉባኤ አደረጉ የደብረ ሊባኖስ አፈ ጉባኤ አዳም ይበላል የቅባቶች ዕውር ዘኢየሱስ ይባላል።

During the reign of Fasil emerged others who say *bäqibat yäbahriy lij* ('ontological son by virtue of unction [of the Holy Spirit]) and this was the reason for their appearance. The Däbrä Libanese [scholars] maintained when the Word was united with flesh, God made the flesh [of Jesus] God by nature (*yäbahriy lij*), hence because of this union the Word was anointed by virtue of the flesh and received grace. They thought this made [the Word] an invisible man (*ruq bi'isi*) and labelled it the residual of the foreigners (*tärräfü afirinj*). They held a council before the emperor; the speaker for the Däbrä Libanese was Adam and Zä-Iyyäsus the blind was for the *Qibat*.

The council was set in motion by Adam asking his opponent a straightforward question to explain what his stand was in the *Täwahido-Qibat* dispute. The present day holders of the much coveted name of *Täwahido*, undisputedly since the Borumeda Council of 1878, are the *Karra Haymanot* proponents. Judging by the Adam-Christ language of Adam (incidentally), there is adequate ground to believe that the title was a reference to the *Sost Lidät* group. Zä-Iyyäsus' response was to explain his theological stance in a nutshell rather than categorising himself. Simply put, the eternal Logos lost his (divine) richness (*bi'ilun*) as well as glory (*kibrun*) and became poor (*näday*) when he united himself with flesh, yet he was glorified (*käbbära*) and became consubstantial with the Father (*yäbahriy lij*) when he was anointed by the Holy Spirit.

አዳም ጠየቀ፡ የተዋሕድና የቅባት ሃይማኖትህ እንዴት ነው ብሎ ጠየቀው። ዕውር ዘኢየሱስ መለሰ ቃል ከሥጋ ጋር ሲዋሐድ ነዳይ ሆነ ብዕሉን አጣ በሥጋ ሲቀባ ከበረ የባሕርይ ልጅ ሆነ አለ። አዳምም ይህ ሃይማኖት አይባልም ክሕደት ይባላል አለ። የእኛስ ሃይማኖት ቃል ከሥጋ ጋራ በተዋሐደ ጊዜ ነድየ ይባላል ጳውሎስ አነደየ ርእሱ በእንቲአን እንዳለ፤ ነድየ መባሉ ካምላክነቱ ክብር ከብዕሉ አይደለም አዳም የተሠጠውን የልጅነት ክብር አጥፍቶ ነበርና ከልጅነት ክብር ነዳይ የሆነን ሥጋ ለበሰ ማለት ነው። በዚህ ሥጋ ተቀብቶ ጸጋ መንፈስ ተቀብሎ በኑር ሆነ እንላለን አለ። ተከራክሩ ከቅዱሳት መጻሕፍት ከኃርሳርዮስ ዘእንዚናዙ ካታናቴዎስ ምስክር ሰጡ። ደብረ ሊባኖሶች በቅባቶች ታየባቸው ተሰደዱ።

Adam asked 'how is your faith with regard to unionist (*Täwahido*) and unctionist (*Qibat*)? Blind Zä-Iyyäsus answered, 'When the Word united with flesh, he became poor and lost his riches (*näday honä bi'ilun at't'a*) but when he was anointed in the flesh he was glorified and became the ontological son (*yäbahriy lij*)'. Adam replied 'this can't be called religion, it is apostasy'. Our religion is rather when the Word was united with the flesh, he it is said of him 'he became poor' as Paul<sup>35</sup> said 'for your sakes he became poor'. It is not from the riches and glory of his divinity but it means he assumed an impoverished humanity from the status of sonship because Adam had lost the status of sonship bestowed upon him. He said that 'we say he became a firstborn being anointed with this flesh, and having received Spirit [and] grace'. They debated giving evidence from the Holy Scriptures, Gregory of

<sup>35</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:9.

Nazianzus and Athanasius. Däbrä Libanese scholars were defeated by *Qibatočč* and they were exiled.<sup>36</sup>

Zä-Iyyäsus and his friends, therefore, would have understood the Cyrillian problem phrase of *bä-zätäsäbī-ä täqäbī-ä* ('He was anointed because he was incarnated') as he had to be anointed by the Holy Spirit in order to undo the effects of the incarnation on the eternal Word, namely losing his divine glory.

The second wave of the *Qibat* teaching began during the reign of Yohannis I (1668-1682). The leaders of the new *Qibat*, this time, were Akalä Kirstos and friends. Rejecting the extreme kenotic Christology of their predecessors, that by being anointed with the Spirit, the eternal Word re-gained the divine glory he lost because of the incarnation, they proposed that the purpose of the anointment was to glorify the humanity rather than the divinity. Because of the hypostatic union duality was lost and the Word was able to become a man. But it was precisely the anointment of the Holy Spirit that made the opposite move possible: the man was made God. In other words, by the hypostatic union God became man. The attributes of humanity were predicated to divinity. But the attributes of the divinity were not predicated to the humanity as yet. After the union, God is now able to be what he could not be in his own divine being without losing or compromising his deity. By the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the humanity was elevated to the status of divinity without ceasing to be human. The human was able to be what he could not in his own nature. To illustrate the point further, if the union goes to the half-way point, then the anointing completes the circle by joining the remaining half: God became man by union and man became God by anointment (*bäqibat yäbahriy lij yäbahriy Amlak honä*). In the words of Kidanä Wäld,

በአንደኛው ዮሐንስ የተነሱ እነ አካለ ክርስቶስ ዜገ ማለትን ነቅፈው፤ አጸይፈው፤ እስመ ተዋህዶ አእተታ ለምንታዊ ይላልና ሥጋ በተዋሐዱ አንድ አካል ሆነ እንጂ የአምላክነት ክብር አላገኘም። ሲቀባ ግን ክብር ተላልፎለት፤ ተፈጥሮ ተገብሮ ጠፍቶለት፤ በቅባት የባሕርይ ልጅ የባሕርይ አምላክ ሆነ ብለዋል። ሚስጥሩ መቀባትንና መለወጥን ለሥጋ ብቻ መስጠት ነው።<sup>37</sup>

Akalä Kirstos and friends, who rose during [the reign of] Yohannis I, rejected and renounced 'he became poor' (*zegä malätin näqfāw, as 'äyyifāw*), because it says 'the union

<sup>36</sup>Guidi 'uno squarcio di storia ecclesiastica di Abissinia' in *Bessarione*, vol. VIII, anno V, Roma 1900-1901, text in Amharic with Italian translation, p.22.

<sup>37</sup>Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgbä Qalat*, 780.

removed duality' the flesh didn't get the glory (status) of 'God' other than becoming one person through the union. When he was anointed, however, the glory [of the Word] was imparted to him (his humanity) [and] nature (i.e. limitations) and necessity eradicated from him (*täfat'ro tägäbro t'äftollät*) and he (in his humanity, that is) became the God and Son through the anointing [the of Holy spirit] (*bäqibat yäbahrïy lij'*, *yäbahrïy Amlak honä*). The secret is to attribute change and anointment only to the flesh.<sup>38</sup>

It is interesting to note that the *Qibat* theologians use the expressions '*bäqibat yäbahrïy lij'*' and '*bäqibat yäbahrïy Amlak*' interchangeably and, at times, together. Whichever way and order they appear, the meaning remains the same: by the anointment of the Holy Spirit, the humanity of Christ was made to be the partaker of the glory of the divine Word.

To the extent that they see the humanity to be the target of the anointing work of the Holy Spirit, Akalä Kïrstos and his friends seem to have a correct reading of Cyril's famous phrase 'his divinity cannot be anointed'<sup>39</sup> (*wä-mäläkotus iyitqäbi'i*). Theirs was, indeed, a much needed amendment to the theological extremes of Zä-Iyyäsus and friends.

The third, and maybe the last, turning point in the history of the sect was the time of Emperor Tewodros II (1855-1868). Arat Ayna<sup>40</sup> Goshu and colleagues hold fast to the core faith of *Qibat* tradition that Christ became the natural Son of God (*yäbahrïy lij' honä*) but when it comes to the question of how or by what means he became the natural Son of God (i.e. his humanity was exalted to divinity), unlike Akalä Kïrstos, they do not single out the anointment of the Spirit as the only means by which the humanity of Jesus was appropriated by the divine Word. Rather they affirm that Christ became the natural Son of God by the union as well as the anointing of the Spirit.

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<sup>38</sup>Translation mine.

<sup>39</sup>Translation mine.

<sup>40</sup> The traditional title given to an Ethiopian scholars is as follows: *Mägäbe Biluy* (O.T. Scholar), *Mägäbe Haddis* (N.T. Scholar), *Liq* (Patristic scholar) and *Mägäbe Mist'ir* (Canon law expert). A person who mastered all the four areas of speciality is given the distinguished title of *Arat Ayna* (literally, 'four-eyed person' or 'a person with four eyes'. Due to the hardship the students had to face to get a qualified mentor and the lengths as well as method of the teaching, rarely the scholars of the Ethiopian Church reach the level of *Arat Ayna*.

በቴዎድሮስ ዘመን የነበሩት እነ አለቃ ገብረ. በቅባት ብቻ ማለትን ነቅፈው መጽሐፍ በክሊቱም ክሊ. በተዋሕዶ ከበረ በቅባት ከበረ ይላልና ቅባት ያለተዋሕዶ ተዋሕዶም ያለ ቅባት ብቻ ብቻውን አያከብርም፤ በተዋሕዶና በቅባት በአንድነት የአምላክነት ክብር ከብሮ የባሕርይ ልጅ ኾነ ብለዋል። ሦስቱ ሁሉ ፍጹም ውሳጢ ነው፤ ሥጋን ከፍጡርነት ቃልን ከመሲሕነት ያወጣል።<sup>41</sup>

Aläqa Goshu and friends, who lived during the reign of Tewodros (Tewodros II), having renounced the ‘only with unction’ position said because scriptures say everything was glorified with the union as well as unction, union without unction and unction without union cannot glorify in isolation. Through the [hypostatic] union and the unction, together, having been glorified with the glory peculiar only to God he became the ontological son (*yäbahriy lij*). All these three [the various versions of *Qibat*] are for change and they do away flesh from being a creature and the Word from being the messiah.<sup>42</sup>

Contra *Hulätt Lidät* theologians who claimed that anointing and union are one and the same thing, the hypostatic union and the anointing of the Holy Spirit are viewed as separate entities, hence *Sost Lidät*. But rather than complementing each other (as their predecessors maintained), the union bringing the divine Logos down to the level of human beings and anointment exalting the humanity to the level of deity, hypostatic union and anointment are regarded to be two sides of the same coin that should always be kept together. One cannot be effective without the other. Viewing the matter from a slightly different angle, for the theologians of the second wave *Qibat*, the hypostatic union was the necessary condition while the anointment was the sufficient condition for Christ to be Son by nature for the humanity had to be first of all united with the Word before it was elevated to the status and possibilities of being the body of God. For the latest version of *Qibat*, this two-step process is but blended into one: Christ is Son by nature both through the union and through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

What exactly set this latest development in the theology of *Qibat* in motion is difficult to know. In the case of the second version, that of Akalä Kirstos that is, the theological factor of correcting the excesses of the extreme kenotic Christology of Zä-Iyyäsus and friends can be taken as a satisfactory reason for the amendments. Given the religious biases and policies of Emperor Tewodros in favour of *Karra Haymanot*, it is not totally unreasonable to suppose that the shift toward emphasising the role of the hypostatic union in exalting the

<sup>41</sup> Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgäbä Qalat*, 780.

<sup>42</sup> Translation mine.

humanity of Christ, during the third wave was, perhaps, the result of political pressure over and above theological considerations.<sup>43</sup>

The non-Chalcedonian Christology in general and the various Christological positions of the scholars of the Ethiopian Church in particular have been the object of misconstruction and caricature. One need not look far to find such misconceptions. Burgess, for example, in the second of his three volumes on the history of Christian Traditions, portrays the theology of *Qibat* as follows.

The “unctionist” [i.e. *Qibatočč*] insisted, on the other hand, that the man Jesus only became the natural Son of God by the Spirit’s anointing, which completely absorbed the human nature by divinizing it. The third group [*Yäs’ägga Lijočč*] denied that Jesus Christ ever received such an anointing by the Spirit, because after the incarnation he was at once the Anointer, the Anointed, and the Anointing.<sup>44</sup>

First of all, Orthodox theologians do not isolate ‘the man Jesus’ from the ‘the divine Logos’. Fundamental to all Orthodox theology, *Qibat* included, is that the Word of God did not unite himself to a pre-existent man called Jesus but Word himself (or ‘the Same He’) became man. Furthermore, though it is apparent from his descriptions that this is a reference to the *Qibat* theologians of the times of Yohanniis I (what I would like to call the classic expression of *Qibat*), at no time did the adherents of *Qibat* hold the teaching attributed to them by Burgess that the humanity of Jesus was ‘completely absorbed’ by being divinised. To be sure, to clarify their point, the *Qibat* theologians might use the term ‘divinised’, in a loose way, in connection to the humanity of Christ. That, understandably, could be open for misconstruction. The meaning they intend to convey, however, is not at all that the human nature was absorbed by the divine in such a way that after the union

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<sup>43</sup> When Abunä Sälama was deported from Shoa by King Sahlä Sillase, father of Emperor Minilik, because of his refusal to accept *Sost Lüdät*, he first went to Däjazmač Wube of Tigray, the governor who facilitated his coming to Ethiopia. But upon learning Wube’s wobbly theological stance over the issue of anointment, he found a stronghold in the person of Däjazmač Kassa, whom he later crowned as Tewodros II. Tewodros was uncompromisingly the admirer of *Hulätt Lüdät* to the end of his life.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989), 165.



Christ had only one nature, which is divinity. That's a Eutychian reading of their, otherwise, Cyrillian theology. Eutychianism could, perhaps, be the most prevalent Christology among the ordinary members of the Church but it is detested and rejected in no uncertain terms by the theologians of all strands of Orthodoxy in Ethiopia. Their position should be understood in these lines: God added humanity to his divine Being to become human whilst remaining fully God, without losing or compromising his deity, by the reason of the hypostatic union. As a result, the humanity with whom God the Word was united became God's human nature, by the anointing work of the Holy Spirit, without his humanity being changed into divinity or a *tertium quid* ('a third other'), a divine-human hybrid. In other words, when the divine (the Logos) became human, the human (born of Mary) became divine.

Kiflä Giyorgis gave us an account of an internal theological controversy held in the year 1622 (the fifteenth year of the reign of Susīnīyos). The contenders hold a divergent Christology. The first group believed in 'union by the anointing'. The second argued the Father anointer, the Son the anointed and the Holy Spirit the ointment, while the third supported the view that the hypostatic union was the same as anointing with respect to the humanity of Christ. Clearly, these are the views of *Qibat*, *Yäs'ägga Lij* (Däbrä Libanese) and *Karra Haymanot* respectively. Oddly enough, the report does not tell us about the fate of the third group but the Däbrä Libanese, who were able to substantiate their position from the biblical text and patristic writings, so the story goes, were exonerated and *Qibatočč* were condemned.

ሱስንዮስ በነገሠ በ15 አመት በቅብዕ ተዋሐደ የሚሉ ተነሡ ጉባዔ አደረጉ እኩሌቶቹ አብ ቀባዒ ወልድ ተቀባዒ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ቅብዕ አሉ። እኩሌቶቹ የመለኮት ተዋሐዶ ለሥጋ ቅብዕ ሆነው አሉ። ንጉሥ ሁላችሁም ከቅዱሳት መጻሕፍት ከሊቃውንት ምስክር አምላክ አላቸው ደብረ ሊባኖሶች ከሁሉም አመጡ። በቅብዕ ተዋሐደ የሚሉን አስወጧቸው።

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Susīnīyos, a group who said 'He was united through the unction' rose. They held a council. The other half said 'Father anointer, Son the anointed and the Holy Spirit unction'. The rest said 'union with the divine (Word) became unction to the flesh'. The king said all of you substantiate your teachings with evidence from the Scriptures and the writings of the scholars (Fathers). The Däbrä Libanese brought [evidence] from all [sources].<sup>45</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Guidi I. 'Uno squarico di storia ecclesiastica di Abissinia' in *Bessarione*, Vol. VIII, anno V, Roma 1900-1901, p. 22.

Both Tesfazghi and Crummey have taken note of the story. It seems to us Tesfazghi, while correct on the theological side, somehow, has got the details of the story wrong as he concluded that ‘the upholders of the first formula (presumably the Däbrä-Wärq party) won’.<sup>46</sup> What is of interest for us, at this juncture, however, is the teaching ascribed to the *Qibat* group at this stage of its history of development.<sup>47</sup> Unlike their successors whose flagship was Christ became the natural Son of God by the anointment of the Holy Spirit (*bäqibat yäbahriy lij yäbahriy Amlak honä*), they advocated the anointing of the Holy Spirit as the agent of the union of the eternal Word with the humanity he assumed (*bäqib Täwahido*). To his credit, we think, Crummey accurately summarised the otherwise difficult Christological position of the group. According to him,

Their developed doctrine of *Qebāt* argued that the two natures of Christ had been fully united by the unction (= *Qebāt*) of the Holy Spirit, whereby also He had fully assumed His office of Son.<sup>48</sup>

Having said this, we tend to disagree with his assertion that this was the ‘developed doctrine’ of *Qibat*. Both in terms of its time (during the reign of Susīnyos, preceding the developments at the time of Fasil, Yohannīs I and Tewodros II) and its anomalous formula, it seems to us, that this can hardly be regarded as a mature expression of the Christology of *Qibat*.

One of Admasu’s criticisms of Ayele was that he confused the concepts of ‘God by nature though the union’ (*bä-Täwahido yäbahriy lij*) and ‘Son by nature through unction’ (*bä-qibat yäbahriy lij*).<sup>49</sup> Those who combine union and unction do so by equating ‘God by nature’ with ‘Son by nature’. While the two formulas look similar at first glance, upon close inspection they are quite different. At this stage, it suffices to point out that the former is a synthesis of the *Hulätt Lidät* (*Karra Haymanot*) but the latter summarises the *Qibat* Christology.<sup>50</sup> Admasu, out of a pastoral duty, declined to elaborate the difference between

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<sup>46</sup> Tesfazghi, *Christological Positions*, 77 & 78.

<sup>47</sup> We will come back to the same story at a later stage as we examine the history of the doctrinal development of the other two groups.

<sup>48</sup> Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 190

<sup>50</sup> We reserve the discussion of ‘*Bä-Täwahido yä-bahriy Amlak*’ to the section on the Christology of *Karra Haymanot*. The meaning this formula was intended to convey was that Christ is fully God and equal with the other two persons of the Trinity in every way while he was on earth (i.e. in his

‘God by nature’ and ‘Son by nature’ because of his deep seated mistrust of <sup>51</sup> Ayele that he might use it to instigate an internal division within the Orthodox Church.<sup>52</sup> Given the importance of these formulae to our understanding of the development of Ethiopian Christology, and that Admasu was one of the best, arguably the best, theological mind the country produced, it was, indeed, regrettable that he took his unsurpassed knowledge with him to the grave.

To substantiate their claim, the *Qibatočč* quote several proof-texts from the Bible (the Old and the New Testaments) as well as patristic writings. The key biblical evidence is the climactic statement in the Apostle Peter’s day of Pentecost sermon in Acts 10:37-38: 37:

You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached: how God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him (NIV).<sup>53</sup>

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humanity) so much so that, himself being the giver of the Spirit, he does not need to be anointed, for his own sake, by the Holy Spirit as opposed to his own spirit.

<sup>51</sup> Ayele dedicated his controversial book to the beloved people of Ethiopia who bravely defended Christianity for many centuries (‘ለተወደደውና በረጅም ዘመናት ስለ ክርስቲያን ሃይማኖት በጀግንነት ለተከላከለው የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ’). For his life-long works on ecumenism, it suffice to read Ayele’s interview to an Amharic Newspaper entitled ‘*Yä’and Bahriyna yäHulätt bahriy liyunät tädämsisuwal*’ (The end of the Debate on the one and two natures of Christ). Ayele argues that a faith that talks about numbers is no relevant to any side (*qutirīn liyassāma yāmičīl imnnat lahulum yamit’ākīm aydallām*). Cf. *T’omar*, July 1996. The interview was subsequently published in Ayele Teklehaymanot, *Miscellanea Aethiopica*, vol. I (Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Enterprise, 1999), pp. 451-456, citing p. 456. Incidentally, this was Ayele’s position all along since the publication of his PhD dissertation thirty seven years ago.

Ayele’s ecumenical spirit, respect for the Orthodox Church and the love of his country has not been reciprocated by the Orthodox scholars. Ayalew Tamīru, for example, gave the hostile title, *Mäčč Tällämädänna Kätäkula Zimdinna* (*When Does Kinship with the Wolf became Customary?*) to the book he authored as a response to Ayele. Kidanä Maryam went further than that in his criticism of Ayele accusing him as Fascist sympathizer.

<sup>52</sup> Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 190.

<sup>53</sup> Italics mine.

Other Old and New Testament Scriptural passages that deal with the theme of anointment are systematically chosen and lined up. The Lukan narration of the self-awareness of Jesus fulfilling the messianic role of the Servant of the Lord of Deutero Isaiah in Isa. 61:1 is one of them.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has *anointed* me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (NIV: Luke 4:18-19)<sup>54</sup>

So does Acts 4:27, the prayer of the first disciples of Jesus in the face of persecution by the Jewish leaders, equate Jesus with the 'anointed one' of the Royal Psalm 2, as being ultimately fulfilled by Jesus Christ (Luke 4: 18-19).

The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his *Anointed* for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst *anoint*, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel (RSV: Acts 4:26-27)<sup>55</sup>

Jn. 3:34-35: 'For it is not by measure that God gives his Spirit. The Father loves his Son and has given all things into his hands', is also one of the most frequently cited verses.

### 3.2. *S'ägga*

The adherents of *S'ägga* think of themselves as the true successors of Frumentius who held fast to the religion that was handed down to them from the Fathers of the Church (*Haymanotä Abäw*) and blame the followers of *Karra Haymanot*<sup>56</sup> and *Qibat* for

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<sup>54</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>55</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>56</sup> '*Karra Haymanot*' (= 'knife of religion') is a pejorative epithet that whose implied meaning is that the followers of this group have trimmed the true faith to fit their mould. Kidanä Wäld suggests another nickname, *Yäbahriy Lijočč*, in return to their ascription of the term '*Yäs'ägga Lijočč*' for what he believed was the ancient faith. Cf. Kidanä Wäld Kifle, *Haymanotä Abäw Qäddämt*, 26.

pejoratively<sup>57</sup> labelling them ‘Yäs’ägga *Lij*’ after snatching their age-old name, *Tāwahido*. Kidanä Wäld writes,

የኢትዮጵያም እምነትና ትምህርት ከአብርሃ አጽብሐ እስካሁ ሱስንዮስ ይህ ብቻ ነበረ፤ በሱስንዮስና በፋሲል ዘመን ግን ካራና ቅባት የሚባሉ እናዛዥ ዘድንግል እነዚህ የሱስ ኹለት ወገኖች ተነሥተው ተዋሕዶን ስም ቀምተው ተዋሕዶና ኦርቶዶክስ እኛ ነን ብለው እውነተኛውን ተዋሕዶ ጸጋ<sup>58</sup> የሚሉ ስም ቀብተውታል።

This was the religion and doctrine of Ethiopia from Ezana and Sezana up until Susīnīyos. During the reigns of Susīnīyos and Fasil, however, rose two groups called *Karra* and *Qibat*, Azaž Zā-Dīngīl and Zā-Iyyāsus with their respective friends, snatched the name *Tāwahido* and having said we are the true [representatives of] *Tāwahido* and Orthodoxy, they have painted the true *Tāwahido* with the epithet ‘*S’ägga*’<sup>59</sup>

The same truth was portrayed elsewhere, by the Kiflā Giyorgis, the master of Kidanä Wäld, in an Amharic poem.

ተዋሕዶ ሳይሆን ስሙ ሃይማኖቱ  
ኦርቶዶክስም ሳይኾን ባህሉና ትምህርቱ  
ሰርቆና ቀምቶ የሰው ስም በከንቱ  
ሰው ሁሉ አለስሙ ምነው መጠራቱ።<sup>60</sup>

*Tāwahido* was not the name of the religion  
And its teachings and traditions were not Orthodox  
Having stolen and robbed somebody else’s name (or identity) in vain  
Why then was every one called by a name that does not belong to him/her?

Many scholars link the Däbrä Libanos Monastery with *Yäs’ägga Lij* Christology and, by deduction, with its luminous founder Abba Täklä Haymanot.<sup>61</sup> It goes without saying, this

<sup>57</sup> Kidanä Wäld used the Amharic proverb ‘*T’älat’ Yiqäbal t’ilat’*’ (ጠላት ይቀባል ጥላት) to indicate the fact that the epithet was meant to be derogatory. Also note that Kidanä Wäld, under the term ‘*S’ägga*’, blames the followers of *Qibat* for the label although he blamed both *Karra* and *Qibat* earlier in his dictionary under the entry ‘*Tāwahido*’ (see p.384). It may be that the term was coined by *Qibat* leaders since they were twice defeated by *S’ägga* during the reigns of Fasil and Yohannis. Cf. Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgäbä Qalat*, 743. The appellation, then, was possibly appropriated by the followers of *Karra Haymanot*.

<sup>58</sup> *S’ägga* is shortened form for *Yäs’ägga Lij* as *Karra* is for *Karra Haymanot*.

<sup>59</sup> Kidanä Wäld Kifle, *Mäs’hafä Säwasīw wä-Gīs wä-Mäzgäbä Qalat Haddis* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1956), 384.

<sup>60</sup> Kidanä Wäld, *Haymanotä Abäw Qäddämt*, 29.

is how the adherents of *S'ägga* would like to be identified. Some scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church from the *Karra Haymanot* side, however, seem to deny that there was, indeed, any connection between *S'ägga* tradition and Abba Täklä Haymanot and/or Däbrä Libanos Monastery.<sup>62</sup> Admasu, for example, writes about the history and theology of *S'ägga* but doubts if the Däbrä Libanos scholars ever held such a position. Despite his profound knowledge Ethiopian Church history and excellent explanation of the theology of each of the three Christological traditions in Ethiopia, Admasu was unable either to affirm the claim that Däbrä Libanos was the nerve centre of *Yäs'ägga Lijōčč* or to deny the assertion and tell us exactly who held this position. In his own words,

ምንም ይህን ስም የያዙ ደብረ ሊባኖሶች ለመኾናቸው እርግጠኛ ባልኾንም ቢልደቶች ወይም የጸጋ ልጆች የሚባሉት ወገኖች ባህል እንደሚከተለው ነው።<sup>63</sup>

Even though I cannot be certain that this name belongs to the Däbrä Libanese, the tradition of the groups called *Sost Lidätočč* or *Yäs'ägga Lijōčč* is as follows.

Crummey, based on Guidi,<sup>64</sup> argues that Däbrä Libanos scholars were the defendants of the *Tāwahido* (= *Karra Haymanot*) faith during the time of Emperor Susīniyos against *Qibat* teaching that controlled Gojjam until they were won over by the new sect, *Yäs'ägga Lij*.<sup>65</sup> We do not know exactly how and when Däbrä Libanos did change from hard-core *Karra* to bastion of *S'ägga*. Crummey suggested soon before or after 1705 as a possible date, assuming that the internal fight in the monastery might have been caused by of the introduction of *Yäs'ägga Lij* teaching. By 1763, however, Däbrä Libanos was completely taken over by *S'ägga* and its *Karra İč'ägge* was deposed at the Council of Kayla Meda, in Gondar.<sup>66</sup> Aläqä Lämman, on the other hand, believes the conversion of Shoa happened at a

<sup>61</sup> For the association of Däbrä Libanos with *S'ägga* sect, cf. Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 23; Ayele, *Yä-İtyop'ya Betä Kīrstiyan*, 153-154; Tesfazghi, *Current Christological Positions*, 74; Kidanä Wäld Kifle, *Mäzgäbä Qalat*, 743; Gorgorios (Abba), *Yäbetä Kīrstiyan Tarik*, 75.

<sup>62</sup> According to the Ethiopian oral tradition, the attribution of *Sost Lidät theology* to the Täklä Haymanot School was the result of confusing Abba Täklä Haymanot (the founder of the Däbrä Libanos Monastery who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century) with another 17<sup>th</sup> century-man known by the same name, Täklä Haymanot, but who was the disciple of Paez.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*, 182.

<sup>64</sup> Guidi, *Uno Squarcio*, 20-22

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 22.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 23.

much later time, in the 19th century, when Sahlä Sillase, the father of Emperor Minilik, was the king of Shoa.<sup>67</sup>

There may, perhaps, be more than one factor behind the reluctance to associate Däbrä Libanos with *S'ägga* teaching. It is possible that given the leading role the scholars of Däbrä Libanos Monastery played in defending Orthodox Christianity, any group that claims continuity with this monastery would be regarded as genuine. Moreover, Abba Täklä Haymanot, the founder of the monastery, is one of the most venerated saints in Ethiopia. Such is his influence on the Orthodox faithful that any group that traces its origin back to him stands a very high chance of gaining recognition and acceptance by the vast majority of the people regardless of doctrinal soundness.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, historically, *Īč'ägge* (=Abbot) of Däbrä Libanos Monastery was the highest ecclesiastical position Ethiopian nationals could fill for the patriarchate was reserved for the Egyptian nationals. The fact that the Alexandrian prelates, in most cases, were aloof because of cultural differences and language barriers, paved the way for the *Īč'ägges* to be powerful. The *Īč'ägge* was also seen as honorary head of all monastic communities in the country. Since the Ethiopian Church gained autocephaly in 1955, however, the title has become the designation of the native Patriarchs of the Ethiopian Church rather than being given to the Abbots of the monastery. Given the *Karra* dominance of the Church since Borumeda, it is not impossible that the present leaders of the Church can be portrayed as usurpers, at least in some regions, as most of the holders of the title of *Īč'ägge* in the past were champions of *S'ägga*.

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<sup>67</sup> Däbrä Libanos included along with Yifat, Ankobär and Aramba. Mänz, Īnsaro, Morät and Wägda remained loyal to *Karra Haymanot*. Cf. Lämna, *Mäs'hafä Tizäta*, 153. Also See the annexe for the map of these places.

<sup>68</sup> Täklä Haymanot, affectionately called by millions of Ethiopians as 'Täkläyyä'. Millions of Ethiopians passionately believe the myths about this saint narrating his miraculous birth, incredible evangelistic career and dramatic death.

We do not know much about the history of the doctrinal development of this sect unlike their rival traditions of *Qibat* and *Karra*.<sup>69</sup> Even if we leave aside the works of their opponents on the history and theology of the advocates of *S'ägga Lij* as susceptible to misrepresentation (which may or may not be true), we still have some excellent manuals written by the scholars of the sect defending their theology and preserving their own history. One among these reliable works is that of Kiflä Giyorgis's *Haymanotä Abäw Qäddämt*, intentionally entitled as such to highlight an uninterrupted doctrinal continuation between the early Fathers and this group. According to Kiflä Giyorgis,

የተዋሕዶ ባሕል ባጭር ቃል ይህ ነው። ቃልና ሥጋ በተዋሕዶ ወልድ ዋሕድ<sup>70</sup>፤ ፩ አካል ፩ ልጅ ፍጹም አምላክና ፍጹም ሰው። በተዓቅቦ ፪ ባሕርያት፤ ፪ ግብራት፤ ፪ የባሕርይ ልደታት፤ ወልድ አብ በመለኮቱ ወልድ ማርያም በትስብእቱ። አብ ቀባዒ፤ ወልድ ተቀባዒ፤ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ቅብዕ። ሥግው ቃል በተዋሕዶ ገንዘብ ባደረገው በሥጋ ርስት በሥጋ ባሕርይ መንፈስ ቅዱስን ከአብ ተቀብቶ ተቀብሎ፤ በቅባት መሲሕ ወበኩር በኩረ ልደት ለኩሉ ፍጥረት፤ ዳግማይ አዳም፤ ንጉሠ ነገሥት ሊቀ ካህናት፤ ነቢይ ሐዋርያ፤ ላእክ መልአክ ኾነ ወይም ተባለ ማለት ነው። ይህ ኹሉ በቅባት የሚሰጥ የሹመትና የግብር ስም ነው።<sup>71</sup>

This in a nutshell is the tradition of *Tāwahido*. The Word and the flesh through the [hypostatic] union [became] the incarnate Son: one person, one Son, perfect God and perfect man. Two natures, two acts and two ontological births through preservation. The Son of God the Father in his divinity and the son of Mary in his humanity. The Father [is] the anointer; the Son [is] the anointed one and the Holy Spirit [is] the unction (ointment). This means, the incarnate Word by the virtue of the property and nature of the flesh, which he made his own by the reason of the union, having received the Spirit and being anointed, became or called Messiah and the Firstborn for all creatures, the second Adam, king of kings and high priest, prophet, apostle, sender of the angels. All these are titles and roles (የሹመትና የግብር ስም ነው) that are given through the unction.

We begin by unpacking what has been positively confessed. First of all, it has to be said, contrary to the prevalent view that the adherents of *S'ägga* are adoptionists, if the man Jesus became the Son of God by the anointing of the Holy Spirit at some point in time

<sup>69</sup> Thanks to the seminal works of two *S'ägga* scholars, Kiflä Giyorgis and his disciple Kidanä Wäld Kifle, we have an elaborate explanation of the history of development of *Karra* and *Qibat* traditions. The scholars, however, did not show the same rigour and critical evaluation of the doctrinal history of their own tradition rather than presenting it as 'the faith of the early Fathers of the church.

<sup>70</sup> *Wahid* means 'unique', 'only', 'one'. Cf. Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez*, 160. When the Ge'ez clause *Wäld Wahid* is followed by the Amharic clause '*And Lij*', a problem of repetition occurs as both mean 'one Son'.

<sup>71</sup> Kidanä Wäld Kifle, *Haymanotä Abäw Qäddämt*, 24.



(usually at his baptism in the River Jordan), the Christology of the adherents of *S'ägga*, if anything, is definitively Alexandrian orthodoxy. Crummey's position on this matter is ambiguous. On the one hand he argues that the group has 'moved well beyond *Qebāt* towards Chalcedon'. On the other hand, he seems to agree with the Lazarist theologian Biancheri who sees the group as adoptionist.<sup>72</sup> Against the charge of adoptionism, Kiflä Giyorgis cites the *Qerillos* (Cyril) section of *Haymanotä Abäw* as the group's defence. Incidentally, Cyril himself was misunderstood as an adoptionist by some of his contemporaries.

ኢኮነ ክርስቶስ አምላክ እመንገለ ትስብእት በከመ እቤ ቅድመ አላ አምላክ ውእቱ ቃል ሥጋ ዘኮነ ወተትሐተ ከመ ናእምሮ እስመ እምቅድመ ትስብእቱ ቦቱ ፍጹም ስብሐተ መለኮት ዘህላዌሁ  
Christ did not become God because of his humanity. In accordance with but rather the pre-existent Word of God himself became flesh.

Contra the historic heresies, Christ is confessed as the incarnate God (*bä-Tāwahido Wäld wahid*), perfect God and perfect man (*fis's'um Amlakinna fis'um säw*) and one Son (*and lij*).<sup>73</sup> Secondly, we must say, the *Sost Lidät* Christology is as Alexandrian as their *Karra* opponents, traditionally known to hold the classic Alexandrian position,<sup>74</sup> as it is unmistakably identifiable from their affirmation of one person or hypostasis (*and akal*). It was a historical tragedy and a theological scandal that the Alexandrian prelate, unfortunately, sent to Emperor Yohanni's a confession of faith that upholds *Karra* and condemns *Sost Lidät* (who described Alexandria as their mother and the patriarch as their father) at the Council of Borumeda.<sup>75</sup>

When not perceived as adoptionist heresy, followers of the *S'ägga* were seen by some, albeit few, as Chalcedonians. In fairness to the holders of this view point, we must say the theologians of *S'ägga* tradition, at least as they are depicted by Kiflä Giyorgis, seem to

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 24.

<sup>73</sup> Whether or not Nestorius knowingly promoted two sons Christology has been a matter of debate among scholars. He was understood (or even misunderstood) by Cyril and friends as the adherent of the doctrine of two sons. Following the teachings of Cyril and other Eastern Fathers, the Ethiopian Church also believes he was guilty of two sons Christology.

<sup>74</sup> Crummey, for example, entitled his section on the theology of *Karra* as the 'Classic Alexandrian Position'.

<sup>75</sup> An in-depth discussion of the history and theology of the Borumeda Council of 1878 will follow soon.

favour terms such as ‘two natures’ and ‘two actions’ being preserved in Christ (*bātā’aqbo Hulätt bahriyat, Hulätt gibrat*) that could easily be mistaken with Chalcedonian theology. This has led some scholars to believe that the Christology of the adherents of *S’ägga* is essentially similar to, if not the same as, Chalcedonian Christology. We know this view was adopted by, not least, Ayele,<sup>76</sup> and, probably, Crummey.<sup>77</sup> The Capuchin Cardinal Massaja, for example, held the view that *Yä-S’ägga Liḥ* Christology is essentially a Catholic Christology save for the name.<sup>78</sup>

Faith in the preservation of ‘two natures’ in Christ, however, does not, necessarily, make one a Chalcedonian any more than Cyril of Alexandria was a Chalcedonian. In fact, Cyril himself was criticised for agreeing to the Formulary of Re-union<sup>79</sup> in spite of its ‘two natures’ and ‘one person’ language.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ayele, *Yä-Itiop’ya Betä Kīrsīyan*, 155.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 24.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. G. Massaja, *I Miei Trenta cinque Anni Nell’Alta Etiopia. Memorie Storiche di Fra Guglielmo Massaja* (Rome, 12 vols., 1885-95), i. 116-117. Also see Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 24.

<sup>79</sup> The Council of Ephesus was convened by the order of Theodosius II, on Nestorius’s request, to resolve the Christological crisis that caused great disturbances in the capital, Constantinople. The emperor was uncompromisingly pro-Nestorius. Cyril, the defendant, took advantage of the delay of the Roman legates (who were on the side of Cyril) and the Antiochenes (who supported Nestorius) because of adverse circumstances and condemned Nestorius in a highly partisan party. This resulted in the breakdown of communion between the pro-Alexandrians and pro-Constantinople sees for the next two years. Both parties were under immense pressure from the emperor to resolve the crisis, as a result of which, eventually, agreed to the confession of faith drafted by John of Damascus, which came to be known as the Formulary of Re-union of AD 433.

<sup>80</sup> Cyril’s stance on ‘two natures’ language is a complex issue. Cyril is infamous for condemning the distribution of the acts of Jesus to his human or divine natures rather than attributing them to Christ himself in the fourth of his 12 Anathemas. The 12 Anathemas (also known as the 12 Chapters) were dispatched as an attachment to Cyril’s third letter to Nestorius, *Epistola Synodica* (Ep.17). His acceptance of the Formulary of Reunion, in spite of its explicitly ‘two natures’ language, has been regarded as a climb-down by some of his own contemporaries as well as by modern scholarship. Cf. H. Chadwick, ‘Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy,’ *Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1951), 147; E. Gebremedhin, *Life-Giving Blessing*, (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1977), 38; John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (New York: St. Vladimir’s

... A union of two natures has been effected and therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. ... As for the terms used about the Lord in the Gospels and apostolic writings, we recognize that theologians treat some as shared because they refer to one person, some they refer separately to two natures, traditionally teaching the application of the divine terms to Christ's Godhead, the lowly to his manhood.<sup>81</sup>

Cyril's full response to his critics is found in his first letter to Succensus (*Ep.45*)<sup>82</sup> and letters to Acacius of Melitene (*Ep.41*)<sup>83</sup> and Eulogius<sup>84</sup> (*Ep.44*). To prove our point, however, it suffices to quote the last of these. We read in Cyril's letter to Eulogius,

The doctrinal statement which the Easterns have produced is under attack in certain quarters and it is being asked why the bishop of Alexandria tolerated, even applauded it, seeing that they use the words 'two natures'. ... To these critics it must be said that there is no obligation to shun and reject everything heretics say – they affirm many of the points we too affirm. When, for example, Arians declare the Father to be creator of the universe and lord, must we, on that account, shun these affirmations? The same holds good of Nestorius if he says 'two natures' to indicate the difference between the flesh and God the Word – the point being that the nature of the Word is other than that of the flesh. However, he fails to affirm the union along with us.<sup>85</sup>

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Seminary Press, 1975), 218, n.22; Maurice F. Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 130f.; Frances Young (London: SCM, 1983), 223. Anthony Lane and Graham Gould, however, have shown that what Cyril was against was not the recognition of the existence of two natures in Christ as it was Nestorian attribution of two persons to him. For this alternative view Cf. Anthony N. S. Lane, 'Cyril's Twelve Anathemas: An Exercise in Theological Moderation' in Mark Elliot and John L. McPake (eds.), *The Only Hope Jesus: Yesterday, Today, Forever* (Glasgow: Bell and Bain, 2001), 39-58 but especially pp. 55-58; G. Gould, 'Cyril of Alexandria and the Formula of Reunion', *Downside Review* 106 (1988), 235-252.

<sup>81</sup> We used Wickham's translation of the Formula of Reunion. Cf. Cf. Lionel R. Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 222 (Henceforth, 'Wickham, Cyril').

<sup>82</sup> For Cyril's first letter to Succensus (*Ep.45*), Cf. Wickham, *Cyril*, 70-83.

<sup>83</sup> For Cyril's letter to Acacius of Melitene (*Ep.41*), Cf. Wickham, *Cyril*, 34-61.

<sup>84</sup> Eulogius was Cyril's agent in Constantinople during the turbulent years of the Christological controversy with Nestorius. For Cyril's letter to Eulogius (*Ep. 44*), Cf. Wickham, *Cyril*, 62-68.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Wickham, *Cyril*, 63.

We know Cyril's position with regard to the use of the phrase 'two natures' in a Christological context: even though it was not his favourite expression, he never had any problem with it as long as the eternal Word is confessed to be the sole subject of all the experiences of Jesus.

The most important question, at least for our purpose, however, is to prove whether or not we have any ground to assume that the Ethiopian theologians, especially the adherents of *S'ägga*, know about Cyril's stance on the use of the term 'two natures' either because they had access to the above letters where he explicitly dealt with the problem or from their overall understanding of his theology. This can be done by examining the Cyrillian writings available to the Ethiopians, most significantly, in the shape of the *Qerillos*, *Mäs'hafä Qiddasse* (The Holy Liturgy) and *Haymanotä Abäw*. Although the first two contain a wealth of Cyril's work, sufficient from which to construe his theology, it is the last one, *Haymanotä Abäw* that contained the materials most relevant to our quest.<sup>86</sup>

The three letters Cyril wrote to justify his acceptance of the 'two natures' terminology of the Formula of Re-union – namely his letters to Succensus (first and second), Acacius of Melitene (*Ep.41*) and Eulogius – we can confirm, are all included in the *Zä-Qerillos* (Cyril's) section of *Haymanotä Abäw*. Moreover, elsewhere in *Haymanotä Abäw*, the twelve anathemas of Cyril along with a commentary on the meaning and implications of each anathema are found. Accordingly, Succensus, bishop of Diocaesarea in the province

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<sup>86</sup> Even though *Haymanotä Abäw* is an anthology of the works of over 50 patristic Fathers in a total of about 300 chapters, Cyril's writings constitute 64 chapters, by far the largest collection, to be followed by that of John Chrysostom with 29 Chapters. Athanasius, the great patriarch of Alexandria has 15 sections and Theophilus, Cyril's predecessor and uncle, and the arch enemy of John Chrysostom managed to get just 2 Chapters. The proportion of pages devoted to Cyril of Alexandria in one of the most important documents of the Ethiopian Church reinforces our earlier conclusion that Cyril, indeed, held with great admiration and reverence in the Ethiopian Church.

of Isauria is referred to us in the *Haymanotä Abäw* as *Soksis*.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Acacius of Melitene is known among the Ethiopians as *Afasis*,<sup>88</sup> whereas Eulogius (*Ep.44*) is quite straight forwardly *Awlogiyos*. The twelve Anathemas are translated by their Ge'ez equivalent, as *Qalä Gizzät Zä-Qerillos*. It follows from this, then, that since we have proven that the Ethiopians had access, from early on, to these letters, we have a sufficiently reasonable ground to assume that they know Cyril's difficulty with and solution for the controversial 'two natures' vocabulary.

Comparisons of the content of the above three letters in Ethiopic (and their Amharic translation) with that of Cyril's letters (in Greek and their English parallel translation as found in Wickham's work) further reveals that the translations can be regarded as accurate within very small margin of errors. With regard to size, what is referred to us as a letter to Awlogiyos (Eulogius) is not the full letter but a short excerpt from an important paragraph of that letter which explains the crucial difference between Nestorian understanding of 'two natures' with that of the Eastern Fathers according to Cyril of Alexandria: the Eastern Fathers share the same position with him but express it differently from him (i.e. semantic differences) while Nestorius actually divides the two natures of Christ into two persons (i.e. theological difference). Similarly, the letter to Afasis of Mälit'one (Acacius of Melitene), albeit very brief, is incontrovertibly clear on Cyril's approach to the use of two natures. The two letters to Soksis (Succensus), on the other hand, are full versions. It follows from our observation that while letters to Awlogius and Afasis, indeed, were valuable resources that informed the two natures by preservation (*bätä'aqbo Hulätt bahriyat*) doctrine of the followers of *Sost Lidät*, it was the letters to Soksis (Succensus) which were the most probable source of their re-reading of Cyril's terminology.

In addition to belief in 'two natures' and 'two actions', the followers of *S'ägga* believe in two ontological births (*Hulätt yäbahriy lidätat*) referring to his eternal generation from God the Father and temporal birth from the Virgin Mary. But this view is not peculiar to *S'ägga*

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<sup>87</sup> 'yä-İnsurya awraja yamihon yä-Qisarya ep'p'is qop'os Soksis'. Cf. *Haymanotä Abäw* sections 48-49, pp.304-316.

<sup>88</sup> *Yämälit'on Epp'isqop'p'os Afasis*

tradition. *Karra* and *Qibat* also hold the same view.<sup>89</sup> Elsewhere in the same book Kiflä Giyorgis cites *Haymanotä Abäw* to substantiate this.

ይደልወን ንእመን ከመ ቦቱ ለወልደ እግዚአብሔር ክልኤቱ ልደታት፤ ቀዳሚ ልደት እም እግዚአብሔር አብ እምቅድመ ኩሉ መዋዕል፤ ወዳግም ልደት እማርያም እምቅድስት ድንግል በደኃሪ መዋእል። አሐዱ እንከ ወልድ ዘበአማን በክልኤሆሙ።<sup>90</sup>

It is necessary that we believe in the two births of the God Son: first birth from God the Father from all eternity; second birth from the Holy Virgin Mary ....<sup>91</sup>

The result being Christ is Son of God in his divinity and son of Mary in his humanity (*Wäldä Ab bä-mäläkotu Wäldä Maryam bä-t'isibī'itu*) while remaining one (*Wäld wahüd*) because of the union (*Qalīnna sīga bä-Tāwahido*).

So much for the two births. What about the third birth that became the distinguishing mark of the *S'ägga* tradition? The followers of both *Qibat* and *S'ägga* traditions believe in a 'third birth', but do not agree on the need for and purpose of this 'third' birth. *Qibat* theologies, depending on which strand we are referring to, maintained that the purpose of the third birth from the Holy Spirit was either to undo the effects of the incarnation on the divinity of Christ or to effect the transformation of the humanity of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>92</sup> Whichever strand of *Qibat* one is subscribing to, the catch phrase for the group is '*Bä-qibat yäbahrīy Lij (Amlak)*'.<sup>93</sup>

What about the teaching of *S'ägga* on the third birth? Kiflä Giyorgis talks about God the Father anointing Jesus with the Holy Spirit, without employing the language of 'birth' in

<sup>89</sup> Aläqa Lämna, a *Karra* scholar of first-rate education, says the third birth was of God. As far as we know no other scholar held this position. The third birth, rather, was from the Holy Spirit according to *Sost Lüdät* theology. Cf. Lämna, *Mäs 'hafä Tizäta*, 153.

<sup>90</sup> Kidanä Wäld Kifle, *Haymanotä Abäw Qäddämt*, 173 (Mss. Text, 113).

<sup>91</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>92</sup> Of course, the 19<sup>th</sup> century followers of *Qibat* held a slightly different position from that of their 17<sup>th</sup> century predecessors. See our earlier discussion of this tradition.

<sup>93</sup> Note that the faith in the exaltation of the humanity of Christ is not peculiar to the *Qibat* teaching. Both *Karra* and *S'ägga* subscribe to that. What is distinctively *Qibat* is the fact that they teach this was accomplished by the anointing of the Holy Spirit unlike the other two who hold that it was the effected by the hypostatic union.

this particular paragraph, but introducing the term ‘third birth’ elsewhere.<sup>94</sup> The third birth, believed to be from the Holy Spirit, should be seen as qualitatively different from the first two that are real, natural or ontological. The third, on the other hand, is metaphorical. Elsewhere in the book he clarifies this point in the form of a Catechism.

ጥያቄ፤ የባሕርዩንስ አስረዳኸኝና፤ የግብሩ ልደት እንደ ምን ነው?

ምላሽ፤ የግብር ልደት ለባሕርይ ልደት ምሳሌ ነው እንጂ፤ ዘበአማኝነት የለውም። ምሳሌ ከአማናዊነት እንዲያንስ እንዳይተካከል በስም ብቻ ልደት መባል ይተካከለዋል። አወላለዱም ወዘእንበለ ካሕድ ዘየዐቢ ይባርኮ ለዘይንእስ እንዳለው ኹሉ በወግ በማዕርግ፤ በብዕል በሥልጣን፤ በዕድሜ በዘመን ከሚበልጠውና ከሚቀድመው ተባርኮ ተሹሞ፤ ሀብተ ወልድና ስመ ወልድና ተቀብሎ፤ መውለዱና መወለዱ ሳይኖር በዚህ በውረቡና በነሚኡ ብቻ አባትና ልጅ መባል ነው።<sup>95</sup>

Answer: The functional birth (*yägibir lidät*) is rather a type to the ontological birth; it is not true [birth]. Since type cannot have equal status with reality, its equality lies only in name by being called ‘birth’.<sup>96</sup>

This, nonetheless, does not mean the third birth was unnecessary or dispensable.<sup>97</sup> This brings us to our second point: namely, the eternal Word had to go through the third birth (or had to be anointed by the Holy Spirit) not for his own sake, either for the restoration of divine attributes lost to him because of the union with humanity or for the purpose of deifying his body.<sup>98</sup> He received the Holy Spirit at the point of inception<sup>99</sup> for our sake: in order to restore the grace of sonship Adam possessed before the Fall, received through God’s breath of life (Gen. 2:7), but subsequently lost to him as well as to the human race in general of which he was the head, because of sin (Gen. 3). He, therefore, became ‘the Second Adam’ (meaning the new head and prototype of humanity), and the ‘firstborn’ of

<sup>94</sup> For example see pp. 35, 115.

<sup>95</sup> Kidanä Wäld Kifle, *Haymanotä Abäw Qäddämt*, 116.

<sup>96</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>97</sup> Contra *Karra*

<sup>98</sup> Contra the various strands of *Qibat*.

<sup>99</sup> The most widely held position among the adherents of *S’ägga* is that Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit from the womb. Aläqa Lämman tells us of a minority group within the *Sost Lidät* rank, that held the view that Christ was anointed by the Spirit when he was baptised by John the Baptist, for it was then that the Spirit descended upon him, to stay, God the father said of him and a voice from the heavens You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Luke. 3:21-22; Mark 1:10-11; Mt. 3:16-17; Jn. 1:31-34), Cf. Lämman, *Mäs 'hafä Tizäta*, 154.

the community of God, for he himself had to receive the Holy Spirit first before he could pass it on to us.<sup>100</sup>

The Pauline notion of the Adam-Christ relationship (Rom. 5:12-21), therefore, can be regarded as a *terminus a quo* for *Yäs 'ägga Lij* group.<sup>101</sup> It is only them that associate the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit with the Fall. Adam was called the 'son of God' not by nature but by grace because he, unlike any other person after him, was the product of the direct creative act of God and was permanently indwelt by the Spirit of God that he received with the breath of life (Gen. 2:7) until he irreversibly forfeited his privilege through disobedience. Hence Admasu,

እግዚአብሔር አዳምን ፈጥሮ በንፍሐት መንፈስ ቅዱስን አሳድሮ የጸጋ ልጅነትን ሰጥቶት ነበረ። ዕፅ በለስን በበላ ጊዜ ይህችን ልጅነት አስወሰደ ንስሐ ቢገባ ይህችን ልጅነት ተመልሶ ማግኘት አልቻለም። ስለዚህ ከቺቱ አካላት አንዱ አካል ቃል ሥጋን ተዋሕዶ አንድ አካል አንድ ባሕርይ ኾኖ በተዋሕዶ ምንታዊ ጠፋ በተዋሕዶ የባሕርይ ልጅ ኾነ። ያችን አዳም ያስወሰዳትን ልጅነት ለመመለስ ሲል መንፈስ ቅዱስን በማግኘት ተቀብሎ የአዳምን ልጅነት ገንዘብ ስላደረገ ዳግማይ አዳም ተባለ በኩረ ምእመናን ኾነ ይላሉ እንጂ እንደ ካቶሊካውያን ባንድ አካል ኹለት ባሕርይ አይሉም በማናቸውም ረገድ ግንኙነት የሌላቸውን ወገኖች ከካቶሊክ ጋራ አንድ ናቸው ብሎ መናገር አይገባም።<sup>102</sup>

They do say that God created Adam, and made him to be indwelt by the Spirit through breathing and gave him sonship by grace. When he ate from the fruit of the tree, he lost this sonship and could not get it back even if he repented. Therefore, one of the three persons of the Trinity, the Word, was united with flesh and became one person one nature; because of the union, duality vanished and he became the natural Son of God because of the Hypostatic union. In order to restore that sonship Adam lost, he received the Holy Spirit in the womb and appropriated (acquired) Adam's sonship, he was called the Second Adam, he became the Firstborn of the faithful. But they do not say like the Roman Catholics one person two natures. It is not appropriate to describe as Catholics a group that has nothing to do with them.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>100</sup> An allusion to Col. 1:15-20.

<sup>101</sup> At the Council of Borumeda (1878), where the adherents of *S'ägga* and *Karra* debated in front of Emperor Yohannis and other nobilities, one of the spokespersons of *Karra*, Mäli'akä Bīrhan Yohannis, cleverly avoided getting into the topic of Adam-Christ relationship for he knows that it is the central element in their Christology. For the minutes of the Council, cf. Admasu Jänbäre, *Mäs'hafä Qīne* (Zikrä Liqawint) (Addis Ababa: Tīnsa'e Zä-Guba'e, 1970), 279-283. We reserve the full discussion of the Council of Borumeda for the next section.

<sup>102</sup> Admasu, *Mädlotä Amin*,

<sup>103</sup> Translation mine.



### 3.3. *Karra*

We now turn our attention to the discussion of the Christology of *Karra Haymanot*. Let's start with the name: the group is known by the epithet *Mät'bahit* (Ge'ez) or *Karra* (Amharic), which according to Kidanä Wäld means

ማረጃ መቀረጫ፣ ካራ ቢላዎ ሰንጠ፣ ስለታዎ ብረት፣ ጎራዴ ስለቱ ባንድ ወገን ብቻ የኾነ ወይም ጀ  
አፍ ያለው፣ ሰይፍ ሾተል፣ አፋ ጩቤ. . .<sup>104</sup>

Bayonet; dagger, knife, lancet; shank; single or double edged sword, sabre, stiletto ...<sup>105</sup>

One might wonder why, of all possibilities, they preferred to be known by a name like 'knife'. Actually the followers of this tradition did not choose this title for themselves. It was rather a pejorative label appended to them by their opponents who accused them of cutting (like a knife would do) the essentials of the Faith, not least such doctrines like the 'third birth' of Jesus.

The adherents of this sect would rather describe themselves as the followers of either *Tāwahido* or *Hulätt Līdāt* Christology (Christ had two births: eternally from the God the Father without a mother and in time from the Virgin Mary without a human father).<sup>106</sup> With regard to the first label, *Tāwahido* that is, we have pointed out elsewhere in this thesis that the adherents of *S'ägga* claim that they used to be known by that name until the time of Susīniyos. What about *Hulätt Līdāt*? Can *Hulätt Līdāt* be regarded as an epithet exclusively theirs?

Students of Ethiopian church history are divided over this issue. Tesfazghi holds that *Hulätt Līdāt* was the name given to the followers of *Qibat* and minimises *Karra Haymanot* to an extremist Monophysite (i.e. probably Eutychians) group.<sup>107</sup> Ayele, who uses the terms *Karra* and *Qibat* interchangeably, argues that *Hulätt Līdāt* refers to the same group, call it

<sup>104</sup> Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgäbä Qalat*, 491.

<sup>105</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>106</sup> It is interesting to note that 'Two births' theology is not an Ethiopian invention. Grillmeier has shown that Damian of Alexandria (578-607) had used the very phrase. Cf. Grillmeier, *Alexandria, Nubia and Ethiopia*, 75. What is unique in Ethiopia is the theological controversy it generated.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Tesfazghi, *Current Christological Positions*, 74.

*Karra* or *Qibat*.<sup>108</sup> His view echoes the view of Cardinal Massaja that there were only two factions in Ethiopia; namely, *Qibat* or *Karra*, also known as *Hulätt Lüdät* on the one side and *S'ägga* or *Sost Lüdät* on the other.<sup>109</sup> Crummey sees *Karra* and *Qibat* as two distinct groups that uphold *Hulätt Lüdät* Christology; the difference being the significance they attached to the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.<sup>110</sup> Despite their obvious differences, what is common between these scholars is the fact that they regard *Qibat* as two-births Christology. This is not always the case, however.

At the other end of the spectrum, Aläqa Lämman Haylu (1868-1967)<sup>111</sup>, for example, is unequivocal that it was *Karra Haymanot* that came to be known as *Hulätt Lüdät*.<sup>112</sup>

ስነ ጊዮርጊስ ሦስት ልደት የጸጋ ልጅ ናቸው። ኋላ አንዱ ተማሪ ‘አረ ይኸ ካራ!’ ብሏቸዋል። (ካራ እምንባል እኛ ነን ተዋህዶዎች፤ ሁለት ልደት ማለት ነው።)<sup>113</sup>

Sinä Giorgis was [the adherent of] *Sost Lüdät yäs 'ägga lij*. Later on a student called him ‘oh this [adherent of] *Karra*!’ (We are the ones who are called *Karra*; it means two births).<sup>114</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Ayele, *Yä-Itiyop'ya Betä Kirsitiyan*, 166.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. G. Massaja, *I Miei Trenta cinque Anni Nell'Alta Etiopia. Memorie Storiche di Fra Guglielmo Massaja* (Rome, 12 vols., 1885-95), i. 109 & II.63. Also see, Ayele, *Yä-Itiyop'ya Betä Kirsitiyan*, 161; Crummey, 24-25.

<sup>110</sup> Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 25-26.

<sup>111</sup> Aläqa Lämman was one of the prominent Ethiopian scholars. He studied Biblical Studies (*Biluy* and *Haddis*) as well as Patristics (*Haymanotä Abäw*) and Poetry (*Qine*) under the leading scholars of the time, respectively Aläqa Tāt'amqo and Aläqa Gäbrä Mädhin Fiqrä Nīway. Furthermore, born in 1868, he had eye-witnessed the times and reigns of six consecutive Ethiopian emperors, namely Tewodros II, Yohannis IV, Minilik II, Eyasu I, Zäwditu I and Haile Sillase I. He was present in person in some the Councils held during this turbulent period of Ethiopian history. For his biography, see Lämman, *Mäs 'hafä Tizäta*, 9.

<sup>112</sup> Alämayyāhu, *And İränña*, 26-27.

<sup>113</sup> Lämman, *Mäs 'hafä Tizäta*, 104.

<sup>114</sup> Translation mine.

If the above quotation is a clear reference to Aläqa Lämman's claim that *Karra* and *Hulätt Lidät* are synonymous, the next one is a yet clearer reference to the exclusivity of the name *Hulätt Lidät* to *Karra* and the categorisation of *Qibat* as a form of *Sost Lidät* sect.

በጎንደርና በጎጃም ሦስት ልደቶችና ቅብዓቶች ሊቃውንቱ ተሰበሰቡና ምክር መከሩና 'ሃይማኖት አበው ይቅርብን ይጥፋ' አሉ፤ እንግዲህ አይነገር ተባለ። (እንግዲህ ወደኛ የሚያደላ አይደለም? ሁለት ልደት፤ ሥጋን አምላክ፤ ማርያምን ወላዲተ አምላክ ሃይማኖት አበው ነው። አፈወርቅም ቄርሎስም ይሞክራሉ እንደ ሃይማኖት አበው የሚያጎላ የለም።)<sup>115</sup>

The scholars of *Sost Lidät* and *Qibat* convened a council and decided to do away with *Haymanotä Abäw*. (Well, is it not favouring us? It is *Haymanotä Abäw* [that teaches] two births, [calls], flesh [of Jesus] 'God' and Mary 'Mother of God'. Both golden mouth [John Chrysostom] and Cyril [of Alexandria] try to do so but no one emphasises [this] like *Haymanotä Abäw*.<sup>116</sup>

Alämayyāhu Mogäs, too, argues that *Hulätt Lidät* is the name of *Karra Haymanot* because *S'ägga* and *Qibat* are the proponents of *Sost Lidät* theology, for they believe, though in their own peculiar way, in a 'third birth' over and above to the two births unanimously confessed by all the traditions.<sup>117</sup>

ጸጎችና ቅባቶች ሦስት ልደቶች፤ ሦስት ልደት በመባል ይታወቃሉ። ሦስት ልደት ማለትም ወልድ ከአብ ከመንፈስ ቅዱስ[ና] ከእመቤታችን ተወልዷል ማለት ነው። ይህም ቅባቶችንና ጸጎችን ያሻማል። ጸጎች በማሕጸን መንፈስ ቅዱስን ተቀብሎ የጸጋ ልጅ ሆነ ሲሉ፤ ቅባቶች ደግሞ ልክ እንደ ጸጎች በማሕጸን መንፈስ ቅዱስ ተቀብቶ የባሕርይ አምላክ ሆነ ይላሉ።<sup>118</sup>

*S'äggočč* and *Qibatočč* are known as *Sost Lidätočč* ('three births') [or] *Sost Lidät* ('three birth'). And *Sost Lidät* means (implies) the Son was born from the Father, the Holy Spirit and from Our Lady. And this confuses (divides) *Qibatočč* and *S'äggočč*. [While] *S'äggočč* say [Christ] became 'Son by grace' after receiving the Holy Spirit in the womb [of Mary], *Qibatočč* say he (Christ) became equal with God after being anointed by the Holy Spirit in the womb, just like *S'äggočč*.

According to Kidanä Wäld, historically *Karra Haymanot* had five variants and, it seems, all but only one of the five is in existence today. The other four, now defunct variants, shared one important feature in common: they all confess the Holy Spirit as unction, *Mänfäs*

<sup>115</sup> Lämman, *Mäs 'hafä Tizäta*, 108.

<sup>116</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>117</sup> See also Gorgorios, *Yä-Itiop'ya Ortodoks*, 75 & 76.

<sup>118</sup> Alämayyāhu, *And İränña*, 24.

*Qiddus Qib'*, but differed in their reasoning regarding why the Holy Spirit was called unction. This is in sharp contrast with the existing *Karra* teaching, the official Christological position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, whose Christological formula has been 'Son is unction' – *Wäld Qib'* – rather than the Holy Spirit. Kidanä Wäld presents a synopsis of all the five variants of *Karra* but more than three quarters of the article focuses on the history and theology of *Wäld Qib'*. Hence, in line with Kidanä Wäld, after our brief introduction of the non-operational variants, we devote most of this section to the Christology of the *Wäld Qib'* group.<sup>119</sup>

In a non-chronological order,<sup>120</sup> the first *Mämfäs Qiddus Qib'* group holds that the Holy Spirit is called unction because he created, without a human seed, the humanity the eternal Word assumed. In other words, the anointment of the Spirit was the power of God that miraculously and exceptionally formed the body of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary without the need for human seed. But for the second group, it was because the Holy Spirit cleansed or purified Christ from the effects of the Fall. To substantiate their argument, they cite Rom. 5:14-15, a passage that does not say much about the anointment of the Holy Spirit, but nevertheless portrays Jesus as the Second Adam. Hence, the eternal Word was born with a perfect humanity like the one Adam had before the Fall as a result of the anointing work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>121</sup> The third group insists on taking the Old Testament background seriously to uncover the meaning and significance of the anointment of Jesus

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<sup>119</sup> Our sole source for the variants of *Karra* is Kidanä Wäld Kifle. Unfortunately Kidanä Wäld did not tell us his source other than pointing back to a dead-end, his master Kiflä Giyorgis, to whom he owes everything contained in the book.

<sup>120</sup> In either Kidanä Wäld or any other source we could not find the history of the *Mämfäs Qiddus Qibi'i* groups. We know they do not precede the *Wäld Qibi'i* position but we do not know how and when they emerged and disappeared.

<sup>121</sup> It seems to us that based on Rom. 5:14-15 alone it is difficult to prove that Jesus was not affected by the results of the fall. Some think Luke 1:35, a passage that explicitly makes a cause-and-effect relationship between Mary's conception of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, shows that the body Jesus assumed was preserved from the effects of the fall by the 'overshadowing' work of the Holy Spirit. Because of the dearth of literature on the less common variants of *Karra Haymanot*, we cannot be sure if they have made the connection between Rom. 5:14-15 and Matt. 1:35.

by the Holy Spirit. A comparison was made between the Holy Spirit and the oil of anointment. To this end they quote Exodus 30; the most relevant verses being Exodus 30:23-25.

Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, two hundred fifty, and two hundred fifty of aromatic cane, and five hundred of cassia – measured by the sanctuary shekel – and a hint of olive oil; and you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil.<sup>122</sup> (NRSV)

According to them, this text holds the key to unlocking the meaning of *Mämfäs Qïddus Qïb'*. The Holy Spirit is the unction because he was the agent of union of the humanity and divinity in Jesus in the same way that oil was used to blend myrrh, cinnamon, cane and cassia together when making the oil of anointment. The fourth group, however, adopted a minimalist approach and upheld that Jesus, as God incarnate, had no need for the unction of the Spirit, and as such unction was irrelevant to him, but he was anointed by the Holy Spirit any way in order to set an example for us.

The above four groups, classified as *Mämfäs Qïddus Qïb'*, nevertheless, could further be broken down into two groups depending on the significance and extent of the involvement of the Spirit in the incarnation of the Son of God. The first three, with a maximalist tendency, believe that Jesus had to be anointed by the Holy Spirit for his own sake, be it the creation, preservation (from the effects of the Fall) or unification of his body. The minimalist fourth, however, maintains that the anointment was not for Jesus' sake but rather for our sake, for our example that is.

Before we turn our attention to a detailed discussion of the *Wäld Qïb'* we need to ask why the above *Mämfäs Qïddus Qïb'* positions are seen as variants of *Karra* rather than that of either *Qïbat* or *Sost Lidät* despite confessing Holy Spirit as unction. For Kidanä Wäld, they are variants of *Karra* because even if they claim to confess 'Holy Spirit is unction' (*Mämfäs Qïddus Qïb'*), in reality they do not. Their position should respectively be renamed as 'Holy Spirit is creator' (*gäbari*), 'Holy Spirit is purifier' (*mäns'ihî*), 'Holy Spirit is unifier'

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<sup>122</sup> Exodus 30:23-27.

(*dāmari*) or ‘Holy Spirit is not beneficial’ (*zä-ï-yräbbih*) but not ‘Holy Spirit is unction’ (*qīb*’). In his own words,

እነዚህ አራቱ ኹሉ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ቅብዕ የሚሉ ናቸው፡ ባህላቸው ግን ገባሪ፤ መንጽሐ፤ ደማሪ፤ ዘኢይረብሕ ቢያሰኝ እንጂ ቅብዕ አያሰኘውም።<sup>123</sup>

These four say Holy Spirit is unction (*Mänfäs Qiddus Qīb*’). Their tradition would not qualify them to be called *unctionists* (*Qībī’at*) rather than Holy Spirit ‘Creator’ (*gäbari*), ‘purifier’ (*mäns’ihi*), ‘unifier’ (*dāmari*) or ‘not beneficial’ (*zä-ï-yräbbih*)

That is Kidanä Wäld. Can we really say they do not belong to either *Qibat* or *Sost Lüdät* sects? To this end, we will have to compare the theologies of *Sost Lüdät* and *Qibat* with that of the *Mänfäs Qiddus Qīb*’ variants of *Karra*. First let us take *Qibat*. As we have seen elsewhere in this thesis, the thread that connects the various strands of *Qibat* is their common formula ‘*Bä-qibat yäbahriy Lij honä*’.<sup>124</sup> By using this formula, the adherents of *Qibat* made a clear distinction between the union and the anointment. The hypostatic union resulted in the perfect union of the eternal Word with the humanity he assumed resulting in one Christ and one Son, perfect God and perfect man. The purpose of the anointment, however, was to exalt the body of Christ into becoming the body of God. Because of the union divinity stooped and because of the anointment humanity was elevated. Variant 1 (Holy Spirit is unction because he was the creator of the humanity of Christ) and variant 3 (Holy Spirit is unction because he was the agency of the union) both associate the anointing of the Holy Spirit with the hypostatic union itself rather than the glorification of the body. We can safely argue, then, that variants 1 and 3, indeed, cannot be seen as *Qibat*.

The more difficult task is comparing variant 2 (Holy Spirit is unction because he saved Jesus from the effects of the Fall) with the theology of *Qibat*. *Qibat* theology places a greater importance on the need for elevating the body of Christ to the status of the body of God. That’s where the anointment of the Spirit comes in. It does not, nonetheless, explicitly address in what sense or ways Christ’s body was affected by Adam’s sin other than affirming that the humanity with which the eternal Word was united was similar to the one

<sup>123</sup> Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgäbä Qalat*, 491.

<sup>124</sup> For detailed discussion see the section on the Christology of *Qibat*.

Adam had before the Fall (“አባ ሕርያቆስም ‘ሰፍሐ ገብረ ዘእምጥንተ ሥጋው ለአዳም’ እንዳለ”). According to *Qibat*, it seems, it was his mother, the Virgin Mary, who was the direct object of the purifying work of the Holy Spirit in order to perfect her to be the Mother of God.<sup>125</sup>

መንፈስ ቅዱስ ከምን ያነጻታል ቀድሞ ንጽሕተ ሥጋ ወነፍስ አልነበረችም ቢሉ። ምንም ንጽሕተ ሥጋ ወነፍስ ብትሆን የአምላክ እናት ለመሆን አትበቃም ነበረችና እንድትበቃ አደረጋት።

If one asks what was it that the Holy Spirit was cleansing her (Mary) from; was not she pure in her soul as well as body? Even though she was pure in her soul as well as body, she was not worthy of being the Mother of God and the Holy Spirit made her worthy of that.

It is not unreasonable to deduce that according to the adherents of *Qibat*, the body of Jesus was not affected by the Fall for he had a pre-Fall body placed in a womb of a blameless Virgin purified by the Holy Spirit to be the Mother of God. If this reading is acceptable, then, this position seems hardly compatible with the variant 3 stance that the unction of the Holy Spirit was meant to save Jesus from the effects of the Fall. Secondly, the adherents of *Qibat* do not, in general, make a direct link between the need for Christ to be anointed by the Spirit and his role as the head of the new humanity (in the phraseology of the New Testament, ‘the Second Adam’). That Christ became the second Adam through the anointing of the Holy Spirit is fundamental to the *Sost Lidät* people.

So much for *Mänfäs Qiddus Qib’*. Our next task will be to examine the *Wäld Qib’* Christology.

፭ኛው ወልድ ቅብዕ በሰውነቱ አምላክ፤ ሥጋውን በተዋሕዶ ስላከበረ ቅብዕ ተባለ፤ ተቀብሎ ማለትም ተዋሕዶ ማለት ነው እንጂ እንደኛ በመንፈስ ቅዱስ ከበረ ተሾመ ማለት አይደለም ይላል።

The fifth *Wäld Qib’* [position], divine in his humanity, because he exalted his humanity by the hypostatic union, he was anointed means the same thing as he united himself. It does not mean he was glorified or appointed by the Holy Spirit like us.

This group is known by the epithet *Wäld Qib’* because its followers maintain that the eternal Son does not need help from any person (Holy Spirit included) to glorify the humanity with whom he was united. The act of God the Father anointing the Son (as if he

<sup>125</sup> መንፈስ ቅዱስ ከምን ያነጻታል ወኢረኩሰት እምዘፈጠራ ብሎ የለም። ዳግመኛምስ ወፈጠራ እምጽቡር ንጽሕ ብሎ የለም። ዳግመኛስ ተዓቀባ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ለማርያም እምከርሠ እማ ብሎ የለም። Even then, Mary is believed to have been pure and blameless from the womb. He does not seem to have been affected by Adam’s sin.

lacks something) with the Holy Spirit undermines the co-equality of the persons of the Trinity by subordinating the Son to the other persons. The eternal Son, himself the giver of life, therefore, glorified the flesh he took from the Virgin Mary by uniting it with his divinity in such a way that the flesh became God's body while God was manifesting himself in a human body. Emphasising the equality of Christ with God, in every respect, before and after his resurrection and equating the hypostatic union with the unction of the Spirit, are among the key distinctive traits of this sect.

Azzaḥ Zä-Dīngīl and Abba Kīrstos (also known as Abba Kīflā Kīrstos<sup>126</sup>), are believed to be the founders of this brand of *Karra Haymanot* during the reign of Emperor Susīnīyos. The incident was recorded by the chronicler of Emperor Susīnīyos, Azzaḥ Täklä Sīllase T'innō.<sup>127</sup> Two groups of monks, we are told, who had been vigorously debating over the significance or insignificance of the anointment of the Spirit to Jesus, approached the emperor seeking his backing to uphold their view as orthodoxy and reject that of their rivals as heterodoxy.<sup>128</sup> One of the groups argued that the Father is the anointer, the Son the anointed one and the Holy Ghost the unction. Obviously, as we have shown elsewhere in this thesis, these are none other than the followers of the *Qibat* tradition. The other group, however, maintained that the hypostatic union was in lieu of the unction of the Holy Spirit. This party that equated the 'anointing' of Christ by the Spirit with the 'union' of his divinity and humanity is known by the labels *Karra Haymanot* and *Wäld Qib'* (as Kidanä Wäld put it, 'ካሮች ግን... ቀብዕን አዋሐደ፤ ተቀብዕን ተዋሐደ እያሉ ... ይፈቱታል'<sup>129</sup>). Kīflā Kīrstos and Azzaḥ Zä-Dīngīl were the leaders of the *Karra Haymanot*.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Getatchew Haile, *The Faith of the Uctionists*, IX.

<sup>127</sup> F. M. Esteves Pereira, *Chronica de Susīnīyos, Rei dei Ethiopia*, Vol. I (Lisboa: Sociedade de Geographia de Libsboa), 1892.

<sup>128</sup> According to Getatchew this event happened in 1605 E.C. (=1612/13). Cf. Getatchew, *The Faith of the Uctionists*, VII.

<sup>129</sup> Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgäbä Qalat*, 779.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Getatchew, *The Faith of the Uctionists*, IX; Pereira, *Chronica de Susīnīyos*, Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgäbä Qalat*, 491.



The emperor, however, had the urgent task of defending Gojjam and Ennarya from the Oromo invasion and he therefore temporarily banned the followers of *Wäld Qib'* from promoting their doctrine until he returned from the battlefield. Upon his return a council was convened at a place called Ač'afär in 1612 and the emperor gave his verdict.

Unction for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the grace of the Holy Spirit given to his humanity at the time of the union of humanity and divinity. Although he gives grace to all in his divinity equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, he received grace in his humanity to give it to his brothers, the children of Adam. The grace which he received from the Holy Spirit was not by measure, as in the case of the Prophets and the Apostles but without measure, as has been said in the Gospel of St. John in chapter seven [Jn. 3:34-35] : “For it is not by measure, that God gives his spirit. The Father loves his Son and has given all things into his hand”. Furthermore, it says in the same Gospel, in chapter one [Jn. 1:16]: “From the overflow of his (fullness) we have all received grace upon grace”. And Paul of the tongue of perfume and savour of faith, quoting the prophet David, said in his Epistle to the Hebrews, in chapter one [Heb. 1:8-9]: “The righteous sceptre is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows”. Again our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (has said) in the Gospel of Luke, in chapter 7, while reading, opening the book of the Prophet Isaiah [Luke. 4:18-19]: “The Spirit of God is upon me. For this reason he has anointed me to proclaim (good news) to the poor, to release the oppressed and to preach the chosen year of God”. And in the Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 4, where they prayed in view of the threats of the Jews, Peter and John and said [Acts 4:27]: “Truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy Son Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, Herod and Pilate with their peoples”. This unction is like the grace of the Holy spirit which makes the martyrs firm at the court of martyrdom, and the righteous strong at the time of their strife with devils in the wilderness, and which assists the preachers in their preaching.<sup>131</sup>

*Qibat*, seemingly, won the day. The confessional statement of the council of Ač'afär does not seem, however, to reflect the theology of *Qibat* as we know it.<sup>132</sup> The imperial decree made a clear-cut distinction between the humanity and the divinity of Christ, depicting the former as the recipient of grace and the latter as the giver. This, nevertheless, was possibly a breaching of Cyril's Anathemas.<sup>133</sup> The fourth anathema condemns dividing the deeds of Jesus between his divinity and humanity as tantamount to dividing the Christ himself who is one. The seventh bans attributing the glory of Jesus to the eternal Word alone and the

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<sup>131</sup> Getatchew, *The Faith of the Unctionists*, VIII.

<sup>132</sup> See the pervious section for the Christology of *Qibat*).

<sup>133</sup> Cyril's Christology is not necessarily incompatible with Chalcedonian Christology as long as the true unity of the person of Christ is maintained and the Logos is the sole subject of all the experiences of Jesus.

tenth anathema confesses the flesh of Jesus was the very flesh of the Word.<sup>134</sup> Grillmeier, referring to the same council, also made the same observations like us: ‘It is possible that we have here, via Portuguese missionaries, the expression of Western, Chalcedonian ideas.’<sup>135</sup> If our assessment of the Council of Ač’afär is correct, then, one can say, the real winners were the Portuguese missionaries. The Chalcedonian elements, if detected, should have been of a grave concern to the winners *Qibat* as well as the losers *Karra* for despite their differences in their theology of anointment, both groups are decisively non-Chalcedonian and also held Cyril of Alexandria reverently. We do not know what the reaction of the ‘winning’ group was but we know that the leaders of the losing party chose martyrdom and persecution rather than subscribing to the decree of the emperor.<sup>136</sup>

Even though *Wäld Qib’ (Karra Haymanot)* was denounced as a heresy at Ač’afär (and, perhaps, by some subsequent councils<sup>137</sup> as well), it was precisely this very teaching that

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<sup>134</sup> For the third letter of Cyril to Nestorius and the twelve anathemas, Cf. Wickham, *Cyril*, 13-33. Cyril’s twelve anathemas, referred by the Ethiopian theologians as ‘ቃለ ግዛት ዘቁርሎስ’, have been known in Ethiopia for thousands of years. For the copy of ቃለ ግዛት ዘቁርሎስ, cf. *Haymanotä Abäw*, section 121, pp.562-565.

<sup>135</sup> Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Traditions*, 348.

<sup>136</sup> Getatchew, *Uctionists*, XI.

<sup>137</sup> Several councils were held to resolve the bitter internal schism within the Ethiopian Church over the anointment of Jesus since the time of Emperor Susīniyos. According to Azzaž Täklä Sillase T’inno, the councils of Ač’afär and Fogära were held during the reign of Susīniyos. Cf. F. M. Esteves Pereira, *Chronica de Susīniyos, Rei de Ethiopia*, Vol. 1, (Lisboa: Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa, 1892), 237-238. Also see Getatchew, *The Faith of the Uctionists*, VII, n. 3. The Council of Aringo (AD 1655), took place under Fasil (1632-1667). We have at our disposal the proceedings of this council in Ge’ez and its English translation with introduction both of which were edited by Getatchew Haile. We can safely assume that these councils were pro-*Qibat*. Cf. Getatchew, *The Faith of the Uctionists*, 1-32. Kiflä Giyorgis told us about the theological dispositions of the successive monarchs of Ethiopia after Fasil. Emperors Yohannīs I (1667-1682), Iyasu I (1682-1706), Dawit III (1716-1721) and Bäkaffa (1721-1730), at some point, had had *Qibat* inclinations. Cf. I. Guidi, ‘Uno squarcio di storia ecclesiastica di Abissinia’, *Bessarione*, anno 5, Vol. VIII (1900-1901), 22-25. The imperial favours, however, by no means, had been consistent those

came to be known as the ‘classic Alexandrian position’<sup>138</sup> and the Christological position of the Ethiopian Church.<sup>139</sup> Kidanä Wäld attributed recognition of *Karra* as the sole representative of Alexandrian theology in Ethiopia to three factors: the absence of strong monarchy, the Tigrean intrigue and Egyptian naivety. The story goes as follows:

የጎንደርኝ መንግሥት ዘውዱ ብቻ ሲቀር ግዛቱ ኹሉ በ፩፯፻፸፯ ዓመት ወደ መሳፍንት ከኼደ በኋላ ራስ ወልደ ሥላሴ ትግሬን ለብቻቸው ሲገዙ በርሳቸው ዘመን፤ ከተንቤን ከደብረ ዳሞ ካባ ገሪማ ከነዚህ ከሦስቱ አህጉር አባ ኪኑ፤ ደብተራ በትሩ፤ አለቃ ዐምደ መንሱት የሚባሉ ሦስት ሐሳውያን ተነሥተው ፲፪ ክህደት ጥፈው በኢትዮጵያ እንደዚህ የሚሉ ብዙ መናፍቃን ተነሥተው አስቸግረውናል፤ የሊህም መረቻ አፋቸው የሚዘጋበት ወልድ ቅብዕ ማለት ነው ያለዚህ አይረቱምና ይህን ሃይማኖት አጽኑልን፤ የተላከ ከ፵፪ቱ አድባራት ከጎንደር ብለው ወደ ግብጽ ላኩ።

turbulent days, the only exception being Bākafa who died *Qibat*. For example, at the Council of Yībaba (AD 1699), held during the reign of Iyasu I, the group that got the council’s endorsement had clearly all the marks of *Sost Lidät* theology even if it was not labelled as such by the author of the report. It seems that the emperor had espoused *Qibat* views for some time, probably for nearly two decades, before he succumbed to *Sost Lidät*. It is interesting to note that the theological stance of the losing group (*Sidudan*= the expelled) at Yībaba had little resemblance to the theology of *Qibat*. Cf. Franz Amadeus Dombrowski, *Tānāsee 106: Eine Chronik der Herrscher Äthiopiens* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1983), 68-69. In any case, after Ač’afär, the main challengers of *Qibat* seemed to be the adherents of *Sost Lidät* (known as *Tāwahido*) rather than that of *Karra Haymanot* whose views did not seem to be prevalent until the times of Tewodros II (1855-1868).

<sup>138</sup> Some modern scholars describe *Karra* as Classic Alexandrian position. See, for example, Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 15; Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (California: University of California Press, 1994), 43. We have shown elsewhere in this thesis that a close examination of the theology of the different Christological traditions in Ethiopia shows that not only the adherents of these groups held Alexandrian fathers with very high regard but their Christology was distinctively Alexandrian despite differences in some areas that are peculiar to the Ethiopian context (See the previous section for a detailed discussion).

<sup>139</sup> *Karra Haymanot*, presumably, became the official position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church since the council of Borumeda of 1878. At that council, through his patriarchal letter, Pope Qerillos of Alexandria upheld the *Karra Haymanot* teaching as the official position of the Alexandrian Church and explicitly condemned *Qibat* and *Sost Lidät* groups as heretic. For the occasion, proceedings and theology of the Council of Borumeda, see the next section of this thesis.

At the time when power, save the crown, was transferred from Gondar to the princes in 1777, when Ras Wäldä Sillase was the sole governor of Tigray, during his time, arose three false teachers by the name of Abba Kinnu, Däbtära Bätaru and Aläqa Amdä Mänsut, from (the Tigrean monasteries of) Tānben, Däbrä Damo and Abba Gärima; wrote to Egypt twelve falsities, saying we have problems from heretics who teach this, and that the solution to silence their mouths is to say Wäld Qib', they don't be defeated without this, urging them to endorse Wäld Qib' form the Forty-four Churches in Gondar.

It is conceivable that the authors of the letter were trying to emulate St. Cyril's Twelve Anathemas when they wrote twelve charges against their opponents. Furthermore, *Wäld Qib* was 'falsely' portrayed as the majority view (የተላከ ከግዕዝ አድባራት). The Alexandrians, out of ignorance of their own great patristic heritage and unfamiliarity with the Ethiopian theological tradition, as a result of the long and oppressive Muslim rules, accepted the request, without first checking either the authenticity of the letter or the orthodoxy of its content, and agreed to endorse it as the official position of the Markan See. The Egyptian metropolitans who came to Ethiopia since subscribed to the *Wäld Qib*' dogma, by default, without giving the other tradition the benefit of doubt.<sup>140</sup>

ግብፆችም ያባቶቻቸው ትምርትና ቋንቋ በተንባላት ዘመን ዕልም ድርግም ብሎ ስለጠፋ እውነት መስሏቸው ተቀበሉት ... ከዚያ ወዲህ የመጡት ጳጳሳት ... ወልድ ቅብ በማለት ጸንተው ሲሰደዱና ሲያሳድዱ ሲያሰሰሩና ሲያስገርፉ ሲያስሰይፉ ኖሩ፤ ከዚህም የተነሣ የግብፆች ሃይማኖት ተብሎ ባዋጅ በግዝት የማርቆስን ስም ተቀብቶ እስከ ዛሬ ነግሟል፡፡

Since the Egyptians had completely lost their fathers' doctrine and language during the days of the Muslims, they accepted it in good faith. Every incoming Egyptian bishops ever since were unwaveringly confessed *Wäld Qib*, being persecuted as well as persecuting, ordering the arrest, the flogging and the execution of [dissidents].<sup>141</sup>

Furthermore, equally problematic to Kiflä Kīrstos and Zä-Dīngil was the assertion that the grace that was given to Jesus without measure was the same grace that was also given to the men and women of God who needed divine empowering or sustenance. In other words, the difference was rather a matter of quantity than of quality.

<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately we cannot verify this claim with

<sup>141</sup> Translation mine.

## CHAPTER 4

### ALEXANDRIAN CHRISTOLOGY PRESCRIBED: THE COUNCIL OF BORUMEDA AND THE IMPERIAL EDICT

#### *4.1. The Occasion of the Council of Borumeda*

The occasion for the Borumeda Council was the summit held two months earlier in Säläle<sup>1</sup> between Emperor Yohannis IV and King Minilik to celebrate the peaceful resolution of what otherwise could have been a potentially bloody confrontation triggered by Minilik's invasion of Bägemdir and Gojjam.<sup>2</sup> Monastic leaders, however, intervened and succeeded in averting the imminent war.<sup>3</sup>

The peace treaty meant the monarchs, instead of preparation for an imminent war, were able to re-direct their full attention, energy and resources to other pressing matters that were of greater importance to them, personally, as well as to the country – in this case religion. Hence, Yohannis's proclamation:

**‘አጼ ዮሐንስም ከወንድሜ ከንጉሥ ምኒልክ ታርቁአሁኖ ወታደር አገር አትዝረፍ ተወኝ በቃህ ብለው አዋጅ ነገሩ’::<sup>4</sup>**

Emperor Yohannis proclaimed ‘because I have reconciled with my brother King Minilik [I order] troops to stop looting<sup>5</sup> the people’.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, Emperor Yohannis and King Minilik adopted a religious policy of intolerance towards the Muslims and the practitioners of traditional religions (*Galla*<sup>7</sup>). They

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<sup>1</sup> Säläle is a small town in the Shoa province located 100 miles to North West of Addis Ababa, the modern day capital of Ethiopia.

<sup>2</sup> Gäbrä Sillase Tino (S’ähafe Tizaz), *Tarikä Zämän Zädagmawi Minilik* (Addis Ababa: [s.n.], 1967), 79.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 79-85.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 83.

<sup>5</sup> In those days where there was no modern organised army in Ethiopia, the soldiers used to get their ration by looting the peasants during war times.

<sup>6</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>7</sup> The term used to be the name of one of the major ethnic groups in Ethiopia until the communist revolution of 1974 that changed the names of some of the ethnic groups deemed pejorative. Since

also made it their top priority to unify the regionally divided national Church with the view to restoring Ethiopian Christianity to its pre-Islamic incursion zenith.

Ethiopia, accordingly, is understood as a Christian nation and Islam was seen as an apostasy imposed by Ahmād Grañ on the Ethiopians rather than being willingly embraced by the people. Christians (including new converts from Islam as well as traditional religions) are entitled to full citizenship rights of the earthly kingdom and promised a state of eternal bliss in the coming Kingdom of God. Dissidents, on the contrary, at best, risk marginalisation and persecution, at worst, here on earth to be followed by an eternal damnation in the after-life.

ከዚህ በኋላ ሁለቱ ነገሥታት እስላሙን ሰብስበው እንዲህ አሉ። እግዚአብሔር በቸርነቱ ሁለታችንን በፍቅር አንድ ካደረገን፤ ሐዋርያህ እኛ ነን። ቀድሞ በግራኝ ጊዜ በጭንቅ ሃይማኖት ጠፋ እንጂ የክርስቲያን አገር መሆኑን ታውቀዋለህ። አሁንም እስላምም ጋላም በክርስቶስ ስም እመን፤ ተጠመቅ፤ ክርስቲያን ሁነህ ምግባር ብትሠራ ይህን ዓለም ትገዛለህ ጋላም መንግሥተ ሰማያትን ትወርሳለህ ብለው አዋጅ ነገሩ።<sup>8</sup>

After this, the two monarchs gathered the Muslims and proclaimed this: ‘If God in His mercy made us one and granted us mutual love, we are your apostle. You all know that [Ethiopia] had always been a Christian country until the times of [Ahmād] Grañ where religion [i.e. Christianity] was forsaken because of coercion. Now, whether you are a Muslim or *Galla* (Traditional Religionist, that is), if you believe in the name of Christ, be baptised and abide in good deeds, you will rule this earth and after a while you will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.’<sup>9</sup>

The same policy of intolerance was applied to Western missionaries and other Christian non-Orthodox denominations.

ከእለታት አንድ ቀን ሚሲዮናውያን ሰብስበው . . . ምን ልታደርጉ ወደ ኢትዮጵያ መጣችሁ ብለው ጠየቁዋቸው፤ እነርሱም ወንጌል ልንሰብክ ነው ብለው መለሱ። ንጉሡም፡- ወንጌል አንድ ነው፤ እግዚአብሔርም አንድ ነው። እኔም ሕዝቤን ለመስበክ የሚበቁ ጳጳሳትና ቀሳውሰት አሉኝ። ለማን ለመስበክ ትፈልጋላችሁ? አሏቸው። እነርሱም በዚህ አገር ለሚኖሩ ይሁዲዎችና እስላሞች ብለው መለሱላቸው። ንጉሡም ወደ ኢትዮጵያ ስትመጡ የአይሁድን አገር ኢየሩሳሌምን የእስላሙን አገር ግብጽን ሊቢያን ሳዑዲ ዓረቢያንና

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then the name of the ethnic group has been changed to *Oromo*. But in religious context, the term *Gala* had an extended meaning to include all other ethnic groups that are neither Christian nor Muslims, in other words, traditional religion followers.

<sup>8</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 92.

<sup>9</sup> Translation mine.

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

**የመንን እንዴት አልፋችሁ መጣችሁ . . . ብለው ገሚሶቹን በምጥዋ ገሚሶቹን በመተማ በኩል አስወጧቸው።<sup>10</sup>**

Once-upon-a time [Emperor Yohannis] gathered [all] the missionaries and asked them why they came to Ethiopia. And they answered ‘to preach the Gospel’. The king said to them, ‘There is only one Gospel; and one God. I have sufficient number of bishops and priests to teach my people. Whom do you want to preach to?’ They answered to the Jews and Muslims who are residing in this country. The king said how come you skipped Jerusalem, the city of the Jews and Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia as well as Yemen, the Muslim countries, and came [all the way] to Ethiopia? He then expelled them from of the country some through Massawa and the others through Matama.<sup>11</sup>

With respect to the unification policy, Yohannis and Minilik issued a joint decree to convene a council to resolve, once and for all, the Christological controversy that eluded their predecessors.

**ከአንድ አባት ከቅዱስ ማርቆስ፣ ከአንዲት እናት ከእስክንድርያ ሃይማኖት አልሆንም የምትል ሰው ከክርስትያን ተለይ፣ ደግሞም መጽሐፍ አለኝ ልከራከር የምትል ጉባኤ እንሰጥላን ብለው አዋጅ ነገሩ።<sup>12</sup>**

They proclaimed ‘If any person rejects the one Father Saint Mark; one Mother the religion of Alexandria; he shall be excluded from Christians. Also, if any one claims to have a book (i.e. manuscript) and wants to debate, we will give you a council’.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, Minilik, independently of Yohannis, announced the venue and date of the council with very strongly worded imperial proclamation.

**በምገዛው አገር የምትኖር ካህን፣ ወሎ ከአጼ ዮሐንስ አደባባይ ለርክበ ካህናት ያልተገኘህ፣ ሹመት ያለህ በሹመትህ፣ መሬት ያለህ በመሬትህ እቀጣሃለሁ ብለው አዋጅ ነገሩ።<sup>14</sup>**

He (Minilik) declared, ‘All priests who live in my territory, if you don’t go to the Emperor Yohannis’ camp in Wällo for the council of priests, I will punish the office holders by [removing you from] office and landowners by [confiscating your] land.’<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gorgorios, *Yä-Itiyop’ya Ortodoks*, 80.

<sup>11</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>12</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 86.

<sup>13</sup> Translation, mine.

<sup>14</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 86-87.

<sup>15</sup> Translation, mine.

The monarchs, perhaps, were motivated by personal piety as much as by the vision of a formidable and united kingdom to address the complex theological issues that had been going on for hundreds of years. Gäbrä Sillase explicitly mentioned the spiritual motivation even though he was silent about the political intention. The victorious monarchs, after their impressive chronicles of military success and achievements, believed that the time had come to do something about ‘the after-life’ as earthly accomplishments are temporary and perishable. In the words of Emperor Yohannis,

**ከዚህ በኋላ አጼ ዮሐንስ እንዲህ አለ። ዘእንበለ ሥጋ ኢትቀውም ነፍስ ይላልና እስካሁን የሁላችን ፍቅር የመንግሥታችን ነገር ይቅደም ብለን ሰነበትን። እንግዲህ ግን የምንፈልገው የምንይዘው የሃይማኖት ነገር ነው። አሚንሰ መሠረት ይእቲ እንዳለ የቀረው ግን ኃላፊ ጠፊ ነው ብለው ተናገሩ።<sup>16</sup>**

After this Emperor Yohannis said this: “For it [the Bible] says ‘the spirit could not survive without the flesh’, up until now we gave priority to the businesses of our governments and our mutual love (i.e. friendship). From now on what we need and should focus on is the question of religion. As it [the Bible] said ‘Faith is the foundation’ the rest is temporary and perishable”.<sup>17</sup>

Equally, uniting the deeply and bitterly divided nation under one creed, the faith of the Alexandrian Church, by putting an end to the long-standing religious dispute was high on the political agenda.<sup>18</sup>

Concurrently, three *Yäs’ägga Lij* scholars, two of them brothers, Wallibe Īngida and Zur Ambe Īngida, along with Täklä Alfa, were arrested in Däbrä Libanos, not far from Sälale where Yohannis and Minilik were feasting.<sup>19</sup> Däbrä Libanos had been a stronghold of the *Sost Līdāt* tradition at the very least since the time that King Sahlä Sillase of Shoa, the

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<sup>16</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 87.

<sup>17</sup> Translation, mine.

<sup>18</sup> For the political history of Emperor Yohannis, cf., Zewde Gabre-Sellassie, *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A political Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Bahru. *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 42-59; Täklä S’adiq Mākuriya, *As’e Yohannis inna Yä-Itiyop’ya Anddinnät* (Addis Ababa: Kuraz, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 86.



#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

father of Minilik, had evicted the *Karra Haymanot* followers to Tigray.<sup>20</sup> The imprisonment of the Däbrä Libanos scholars in their own backyard, and on Minilik's watch, seems to suggest that Minilik was not as enthusiastic about and loyal to *Sost Lidät* as his late father was. If Admasu is right, Minilik was a moderate *Hullät Lidät* follower who was willing to accommodate *Sost Lidätočč* for the sake of peace and unity. This is evident from Minilik's one-time discussion with Kidanä Wäld at the occasion of the latter's exoneration from a false accusation against him that nearly cost him his life.<sup>21</sup> Referring to Minilik's earlier proclamation that gave amnesty to the *Sost Lidät* followers who were exiled by Tewodros as a result of Kidanä Wäld's effort, the king made his Christological stance clear.

**ይህን አዋጅ መንገሬ ሸዋ ኹሉ ብ ልደት ሲል ባገኘው ይናጋብኛል ብዬ ፈርቼ ነው እንጂ ሃይማኖቴ እንደርስዎ ሁለት ልደት ባይ ነኝ፤ ከአቡነ ሰላማ ቃል አልወጣም...**<sup>22</sup>

[The reason] I declared this proclamation was because if I find all of Shoa saying *Sost Lidät* [after proclaiming *Hullät Lidät*], I was worried that it will cause unrest in [my country]; otherwise my religion, like you, is confessing *Hullät Lidät* and I do not vacillate from the words of Abuna Sälama.<sup>23</sup>

The council was held in Borumeda on Saturday 29 May 1878 (= 22 *Ginbot* 1870 E.C.).<sup>24</sup> Emperor Yohannīs and King Minilik co-presided. Other political dignitaries present included King Täklä Haymanot and Däjazmač Wäldä Mikael, the grandfather of Emperor

<sup>20</sup> Admasu Jänbäre, Mälkä Bīrhan, *Zikrā-Liqawint* (Addis Ababa: Tīnsa'e Zäguba'e, 1971), 279.

<sup>21</sup> A certain Wäldä Arägay, a priest from Qundi Giyorgis, wrote a hoax letter in the name of Kidanä Wäld and students, intentionally addressing it to Emperor Tewodros but to be delivered to King Minilik by one of Wäldä Arägay's servants as lost and found. The letter was implicating Kidanä Wäld and his three students of conspiring against Minilik with his avowed enemy, Tewodros, who took his father and him prisoners. Knowing Kidanä Wäld's proximity to Tewodros during his fourteen years residence in Tigray, Minilik reacted in a rush and sentenced Kidanä Wäld and students to death on the grounds of treason. However, upon a wise counsel of Däjazmač Wäldä Mika'el, Wäldä Arägay's forgery was exposed and they were vindicated. Cf., Admasu, *Zikrā Liqawint*, 541-542.

<sup>22</sup> Admasu, *Zikrā Liqawint*, 542.

<sup>23</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>24</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 87.

Haile Sillase I. On the ecclesiastical side, the most notable was the Īč'ägge Tewoflos.<sup>25</sup> The Borumeda Council was convened primarily to deal with the imminent threat posed to the *Tāwahdo* (or *Karra*) faith by the wide acceptance the *Sost Līdāt* theology received among the most prominent monasteries. The council did not address the theology of *Qibat*. The adherents of *Qibat*, presumably, were defeated and the supremacy of *Tāwahdo* was firmly established, earlier, at a council held in Axum, under the presidency of the same emperor.<sup>26</sup>

The spokesperson for the *Tāwahdo* party, at Borumeda, was Aläqa<sup>27</sup> Kidanä Wäld.<sup>28</sup> Kidanä Wäld had been highly respected among the *Hullāt Līdāt* circle because of the tribulation he had been subjected to for his faith. A Tägulät-born (Shoa) from a priestly father, Ewosatewos, he was one of the many scholars exiled to Gondär after King Sahlä Sillase of Shoa, the father of Emperor Minilik, had proclaimed that *Hullāt Līdāt* adherents should leave his country unless they accepted *Sost Līdāt*. After a while, he moved to Tigray, closer to Abba Sälama, and lived there for a good fourteen years after which time he returned to his homeland, following Sahlä Sillase's defeat by Kassa Hailu (crowned Tewodros II by Abunä Sälama), and was instrumental in securing a new proclamation from Tewodros that forced unrepentant *Sost Līdāt* followers out of Shoa.<sup>29</sup> His assistants at Borumeda were Aläqa Täklä Sillase and Mäl'akä Bīrhan Wäldä Yohannis.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the *Yäs'ägga Lij* teachers were represented by Aläqa Sīnä-Giyorgis and the deputies were Aläqa Habtä Wäld, Aläqa Wube and Aläqa Betä Lewi. The three teachers detained two months earlier in Däbrä Libanos, Waldbe Īngīda and friends, that is, also joined the advocates of the *Yäs'ägga Lij* after request for their release was granted by the emperor. Of course, both parties were accompanied by numerous scholars, far too many for the

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<sup>25</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 280-281; Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 87.

<sup>26</sup> We know very little about the proceedings of this council. Cf. Gorgorios, Arch Bishop, *Yä-Itiop'ya Ortodoks Tāwahdo Betä Kīrstyan Tarik* (Addis Ababa: Bīrhaninna Sälām, 1982), 81.

<sup>27</sup> 'Aläqa', which means 'chief', is an ecclesial title given to senior theologians.

<sup>28</sup> This one is Kidanä Wäld Ewost'atewos (†1878, six months after the Council of Borumeda) and should not be confused with Kidanä Wäld Kifle.

<sup>29</sup> For a fuller treatment of the history of Kidanä Wäld, cf., Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 540-542.

<sup>30</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 279-283; Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 87.

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

chronicler to mention them by name.<sup>31</sup> Like many of the ecumenical councils of the past, the debate was not held before neutral judges. Normally, the position favoured by the emperor was likely to prevail even though, under exceptional circumstances, the possibility of the underdogs winning the day may not be ruled out altogether. The outcome of the council, one can safely say, more or less, seemed to be leaning toward the *Tāwahdo* group even before the hearing began.

Firstly, government sponsored persecution of the *Yäs'ägga Lij* theologians was already underway as was evident from the imprisonment of Waldbe Īngida and company who were found spreading their teaching in what was traditionally regarded as the stronghold of *Yäs'ägga Lij*, Däbrä Libanos. The persecution was intensified after the council. The ill-fated two, Waldbe Īngida and Zur Ambe Īngida, were singled out and subjected to the brutal punishment of having their tongues severed as well as their limbs and arms for 'blasphemy' for hastily applying the term 'Son of the Holy Trinity' to Christ during one of the sessions of the council.<sup>32</sup> Such was the extremism of the emperor that he ordered the gruesome penalty to be executed in spite of the desperate and unanimous plea to save them from all corners, including the chief spokesperson of the winning party, Aläqa Kidanä Wäld, who pleaded for moderation, bringing to the emperor's attention that even Arius, the arch-heretic, was not punished by cutting off part of his body for denying the very deity of Christ.<sup>33</sup> Kidanä Wäld suggested, instead, exile for the dissidents and pardon for the penitent. Waldbe died instantaneously while Zur Ambe survived the ordeal and died at a ripe old age as a follower of *Tāwahdo*.

Secondly, the seat allocation seems to suggest the status of their occupants before the council rather than convenience or coincidence. Accordingly, the right-hand side was given over to the *Kara* proponents, treating them as plaintiffs, whilst the left, presumably, the defendant's dock, was assigned to the proponents of the *Yäs'ägga Lij*. Moreover, it may not

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<sup>31</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Mimilik*, 87.

<sup>32</sup> Gorgorios, *Tarik*, 85.

<sup>33</sup> Gorgorios, *Tarik*, 85.

totally be unreasonable to see a possible allusion to the Gospel account of the Final Judgement where the condemned are said to stand on the left-hand side of the risen Jesus (Mt. 25:31-46).

Aläqa Haylu's memoir gives us a unique perspective into the state of affairs the night before the Borumeda Council.<sup>34</sup> Theological debates of this and earlier periods, far from being a free forum to exchange ideas as well as sort out differences, were often very dangerous for the members of the losing side who could potentially lose their lives. *Sost Lidätočč*, however, were in grave danger even before the council was convened as was evident from the precarious situation in which one of their number, Täklä S'iyon, found himself.

**‘ከህናቱ መጥተዋል?’ አሉ የሐንስ? ምኒልክ ይዘህ እንድትመጣ ተብለዋል-  
‘መጥተዋል።’**

Yohannis said, ‘Have [all] the priests come?’ (Minilik was ordered to bring them). ‘They have come.’

**‘ሁለት ልደቶች መጥተዋል? “መጥተዋል።”**

‘Have the *Hullät Lidätočč* come?’ ‘They have come’

**‘ሦስት ልደቶች መጥተዋል?’ ‘መጥተዋል።’**

‘Have the *Sost Lidätočč* come?’ ‘They have come.’

**‘ተክለ ልዮን መጥቷል?’ አጤ የሐንስ ናቸው (ልዮን የካቶሊክ አባት መምህር እሱ ነዋ!) ግር አላቸው ለጊዜው አጤ ምኒልክ፤ ዝም አሉ። ቈዩ ቈዩና ‘ተክለ ጽዮንን ነው?’**

‘Has Täklä Lyon<sup>35</sup> come?’ It was Emperor Yohannis (for Leo is the father and teacher of the Roman Catholics). King Minilik was confused for a while and kept quiet. Later on, [He said], ‘Did you mean Täklä S’iyon?’

**‘አዎን’ አሏቸው።**

[Yohannis] said, ‘Yes’.

**‘መጥቷል’ አሉ።**

‘He has come.’

**ዝም አሉ አጤ የሐንስ።**

<sup>34</sup> Lämna, *Tizzäta*, 154. Translation mine.

<sup>35</sup> Yohannis modified his name from Täklä S’iyon (= plant of Zion) to Täklä Lyon (=plant of Leo) associating him with the 5<sup>th</sup> century Pope who was responsible for the Chalcedonian Definition of Faith.

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

Emperor Yohannīs did not comment.

ያ ግብር ገባ ያጤ ዮሐንስ፤ ኋላ ተነስተው ኸድንኳናቸው ገቡ ምኒልክ። እዚያ ሰዎቻቸውን ግብር አገቡ፤ ‘እናንተ ተክለ ጽዮንን ጃንሆይ ተጣልተውታል። ተክለ ልዮን መጥቷል ብለው ጠየቁኝ። ራሱን ቢያወጣ ይሻለዋል’ አሉ። ከዚያ ኸሉት ኸመኳንንት ወዳጅ ኑሮታል እዚያው ግብር አበር ዘመድ የሆነ ሰው። አረ እንዲህ ሁኗል! አለ። ወግድ አሉት፤ ቀን ኸንዱ ድንኳን ሄደና ተኛ። እነዚያ ወዳጤ ዮሐንስ ሲሄዱ ተለይቶ የወታደር ልብስ ለበሰና በወታደር በቅሎ ተነሣና አመለጠ፤ ዮሐንስን ፈርቶ። አንኮበር ገባ። ለምናልባት አጤ ምኒልክ አምጣ የተባሉ እንደሆነ ብሎ ተነሥቶ ሄደ።

Emperor Yohannīs held a reception<sup>36</sup> (feast) and Mīnīlik went to his tent later and held a reception (feast) for his men. Mīnīlik said to [his close circles], ‘Listen, His Majesty hates Tāklā S’yon. He asked me if Tāklā S’yon had arrived. He better flee for his life’. One of the close associates of Mīnīlik happened to be his (Tāklā S’yon’s) relative and passed him the information. He hid in one of their (his friends’) tent and after the people headed to the Council, he escaped on a mule belonging to one of the soldiers camouflaging it with an army costume because he was so afraid of Yohannīs. He went to Ankobär. He then left [from Ankobär] in case Mīnīlik was ordered to hand him over [to Yohannīs].

According to Gäbrä Sillase, the council was officially opened by Emperor Yohannīs telling the *Sost Līdāt* theologians ‘Well then, argue’ (*ingdih tākarakāru alluwaččāw*).<sup>37</sup> The council was, nonetheless, adjourned after the *Sost Līdāt* adherent’s request for the release of their colleagues was granted by the emperor on the grounds of fairness. Owing to the importance of the issue to the Ethiopian Church and the strictness of the royal declaration, numerous scholars and priests from both parties were present at the council. The session resumed after the Waldbe brothers and Tāklā Asfa joined their peers. The actual session can be divided into two parts for the sake of analysis. For the first part, where the emperor himself was interrogating the *Sost Līdāt* theologians, we rely on Gäbrä Sillase’s report. Gäbrä Sillase’s royal chronicle, *Tarikä Zāmān Dagmawī Minilik Nigusä Nāgäst Zä-Itiop’p’ya*, albeit purposefully leaving out a few exchanges, can, nonetheless, be regarded as a first-hand and authentic report on the history of the council.<sup>38</sup> For the second part, whereby the theologians of the two sides clashed, we depend on Admasu’s collection where

<sup>36</sup> *Gībīr* (feast) was an egalitarian tradition of Imperial Ethiopia whereby suzerains (or the rich) were responsible for feeding their subjects who work for them. Ushers seat the guest according to social status but all are served with the same meal. In this system, the kings were responsible for the nobilities and their troops. The nobilities in turn feed their subjects. Emperor Yohannīs had to throw a feast for King Mīnīlik and not vice versa. But Mīnīlik was responsible for his subjects.

<sup>37</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 89.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 89.

what was left out by Gäbrä Sillase was, fortunately, preserved to a certain extent.<sup>39</sup> Gäbrä Sillase later on re-joined the story when the fourth speaker from the *Hullät Lüdät* party, Wäldä Yohannis, was speaking.<sup>40</sup> Except in one instance where the two accounts are significantly different, they are, for the most part, similar.

Unlike Gäbrä Sillase, Admasu was not writing an eye-witness account of the Council of Borumeda, nor did he give us that many details about his sources, which is the norm in Western scholarship. Regarding his sources Admasu claims that he had the dual sources of historical books and eye-witness testimony of those who were present at the Council of Borumeda.<sup>41</sup>

**ኸለቱም ወገኖች የተከራከሩበትን ባህልና የክርክሩን ኸኔታ በተቻለ መጠን መግለጽ አግባብ መስሎ ስለታየኝ፤ ከታሪክ መጽሐፍ ያገኘሁትን፤ ከሸማግሌዎች ያጠናሁትን ባጭሩ እገልጻለሁ።<sup>42</sup>**

Since it seems appropriate to me to clarify as much as possible about the debating groups and the nature of the debate, I explain briefly what I got from historical books and what I learnt from the elders.<sup>43</sup>

This should not, however, affect the reliability of his account as Admasu belongs to a different tradition of scholarship from that of the West.<sup>44</sup> We now turn our attention to the proceedings of the first part as preserved by Gäbrä Sillase.

**ይህን ጊዜ የጸጋ ልጆችን አጼ ዮሐንስ ሀገራችሁ ወዴት ነው፤ አስተማሪያችሁስ ማን ነው አሏቸው።  
እነዚያም ከላይም አባታችን ክርስቶስ፤ ከታችም አባታችን ማርቆስ እናታችንም እስክንድርያ ናት አሉ።  
አጼ ዮሐንስም አገራችሁን ካወቃችሁ አባታችሁን ካመናችሁ መልካም ነው። በእስክንድርያ በመንበረ ማርቆስ የተቀመጠው ሊቀ ጳጳስ የሚያስተምረውን ባለማጎተም ደብዳቤ ልኮልናል፤ ትቀበሉታላችሁን አሏቸው።**

<sup>39</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 279-283.

<sup>40</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 89.

<sup>41</sup> We do not know exactly which books he referred to and which elders (or teachers) he spoke to.

<sup>42</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 279.

<sup>43</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>44</sup> Admasu's originality and knowledge of historical theology is truly profound. We have already pointed out elsewhere in this thesis that one of his books, *Mädlotä Amin*, for example, is a competent and critical response to the doctoral dissertation of the Catholic scholar Abba Ayele Täklä Haymanot (submitted to the Gregorian University of Rome).

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

እነዚያም መክረው ተነሥተዋልና በመንበረ ማርቆስ የተቀመጠው ሊቀ ጳጳስ የላከውን ሃይማኖት እንቀበላለን አሉ።

በዚያን ጊዜ የሃይማኖቱን ደብዳቤ አስመጥተው የመጣልን በዓረቢ ተጽፎ ነው። እኔ ግን ባማርኛ አስገልብጬ አኑራዋለሁ። አሁንም እናንተ ደስ እንዲላችሁ የዓረብ ቋንቋ ከእናንተ የሚያውቅ እንዳለ አምጡና ይነበብላችሁ አሏቸው።

እነዚያም የአማርኛውን እንስማ አሉ።<sup>45</sup>

At this time, Emperor Yohannīs said to them ‘Where is your country? And who is your teacher?’

They (*Yäs’ägga Lijōčč*) said ‘From Above Christ [is] our Father; from Below Mark [is] our Father and Alexandria [is] our Mother’.

And Emperor Yohannīs said to them ‘It’s good that you know your country and recognise your Father. The archbishop, who sits on the throne of Mark in Alexandria, has sent us his teaching in a sealed and stamped letter. Do you accept it?’

Because they (*Yäs’ägga Lijōčč*) had been conspiring they said ‘We accept the faith [of Alexandria] which the archbishop who sits on the Markan throne sent’.

At that time Emperor Yohannīs brought the doctrinal letter forth and said to them the [original] letter came to us written in Arabic but I had it translated into Amharic and kept it in a safe place. For your satisfaction, if you have someone who knows Arabic from among you, bring him forth and let him read [the original letter] for you.

They (*Yäs’ägga Lijōčč*) said ‘Let’s hear the Amharic [translation]’.<sup>46</sup>

Yohannīs’s opening statement ‘Where is your country?’ seems, at first glance, a ridiculous question for all the adherents of *Yäs’ägga Lij* teaching were Ethiopians known to have originated in Däbrä Libanos and its vicinity. Equally bemusing is none of them seemed to be taken aback by the odd question. Actually, we have come across a similar phrase elsewhere in this thesis where the Ethiopian scholars asked the Portuguese missionaries a similar question at the debate held during the reign of Gälawdewos. One is justified to assume that the Ethiopians, presumably, would have a general idea where the missionaries came from and, therefore, were looking for an answer that had to do with their theological locus rather than geographical location. In other words, ‘Where is your country?’ perhaps, was the Ethiopian traditional way of asking one’s theological disposition.

The *Sost Lidät* group replied by asserting their strong identification with the Alexandrian See and theology by figuratively portraying Mark as their Father and Alexandria as their mother. As a chronicler of King Mīnīlik (later Emperor), it may not be possible to know Gäbrä Sillase’s Christological stance but his editorial comment, ‘because they had been conspiring’ (*Īnāziyam mäkrāw tănāstawalinna*), shows his suspicion of the genuineness of *Yäs’ägga lijočč*’s claims to Alexandrian Orthodoxy. Once again, it is clear from the

<sup>45</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Mīnīlik*, 87-88.

<sup>46</sup> Translation mine.

opening statements of the council that Ethiopian Christological controversy was a search for authentic Cyrillo-Alexandrian Orthodoxy rather than theological innovation.

At this junction the emperor challenged the *Sost Lidät* group to demonstrate their loyalty to St. Mark by accepting the official letter of Pope Cyril V of Alexandria (1874-1927). Gäbrä Sillase did not tell us about the date of the original letter. Whether Yohanni's had this Patriarchal memorandum for some time or got it in the two interim months between the call to convene the council and its realisation we do not know. In any case, given the extremely hazardous travel conditions and the hostile Muslim neighbourhood of Ethiopia, Yohanni's possession of the letter was a testimony for his religious zeal for Orthodoxy and resolve for the creedal unification of the country.

#### ***4.2. The Theology of the Council of Borumeda***

It is evident from the wordings of the Imperial proclamation to convene the council of Borumeda and from the affirmations of the *Yäs 'ägga Lij* theologians during the debate, that neither the monarchs nor any of the warring parties have any problem, whatsoever, with the precedence of the Markan See over the Matthean Seat of Ethiopia. Unlike the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Ethiopian ecclesiastical landscape, no group was sympathetic to Roman Catholicism this time. Antiochene theology was virtually unknown and Chalcedonian Christology was equated with Nestorianism and was duly rejected. Acceptance of the Alexandrian Christology was non-negotiable. In the words of the imperial proclamation, which we already have cited earlier in the chapter, rejecting Alexandrian faith was tantamount to apostasy (**‘ከአንድ አባት ከቅዱስ ማርቆስ ከአንዲት እናት ከእስክንድርያ ሃይማኖት አልሆንም የምትል ሰው ከክርስትያን ተለይ፡፡’** ‘If any person rejects one Father Saint Mark; one Mother the religion of Alexandria; he shall be excluded from Christians’). Hence, the debate, strictly speaking, was about deciding the true and authentic representation of the Alexandrian position from among the two factions.

Mämhär Girma Sillase read out Abuna Qerellos's letter to the congregation. Typically, the letter begins with an introduction (greetings and blessing from Qerellos of Alexandria to the Emperor Yohanni's and all the faithful in Ethiopia) and quickly moves to the doctrinal section.



#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

የተላከ ከአባ ቄርሎስ ዘነበረ በመንበረ ማርቆስ፤ ይድረስ ከልጄ ከወዳጄ ከሥዊመ እግዚአብሔር የሐንስ ንጉሠ ነገሥት ዘኢትዮጵያ። በኢትዮጵያ ካሉ ምእመናን ሁሉ። ልጆቹ ወዳጆቹ፤ ከኔ በፊት በነበሩት አባቶቻችን ሃይማኖትና ምግባር የጸና ሰው ጸጋ እግዚአብሔር ትደርበት። አምላክ ማርቆስ ይጠብቀው። ቀዳማዊት ልደት ከአብ ደሐራዊ ልደት ከድንግል ማርያም ስለ እኛ ሲል እንበለ አባት እንደተወለደ የማያምን፤ ሁለት ልደት በተዋሕዶ ከበረ፤ ወልድ በተለየ አካሉ ቅብዕ ነው፤ በሰውነቱ የባሕርይ አምላክ፤ በሰውነቱ እንደ አብ እንደ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ያውቃል፤ ማወቂያም ነው የማይል፤ ሶስት ልደት የጸጋ ልጅ በቅባት የባሕርይ ልጅ የሚል የአርዮስ የንስጥሮስ የይሁዳ መርገም ይድረስበት ከምእመናን የተለየ ይሁን ተብሎ የግዘት ያለበት ቃል ነበረ።<sup>47</sup>

Anyone who doesn't believe that [Christ] was born first birth from the Father and second birth from the Virgin Mary, for us, without a [human] father; anyone who doesn't confess [that Christ had] two births and [his humanity] was glorified by [the hypostatic] union; that He is anointed in His unique person; that He is God in His whilst human; that He is omniscient in His humanity like that of the Father and the Holy Spirit and is the person of the Trinity with the special role of knowledge; any person who confesses 'Three Births', 'Son by Grace', 'God's true Son through Uncion' shall be fell upon him the curse of Nestorius and that of Arius and may he be ex-communicated from the [fellowship] of believers.<sup>48</sup>

The creed can be broken into three parts. The first part is more ecumenical in the sense that it affirms the eternal sonship of Christ, or his first birth from the Father (*qādamawit līdāt kā-Ab*), and the incarnation, his second birth from the Virgin Mary without the need for human father (*daharawi līdāt kā-dīngil Marīyam ... inbälā abat*), in time, for us and for our sins (*silä inña sil*). Granted it is not a verbatim citation of the Nicene Creed but it certainly echoes its affirmations. Those who reject this flagship of orthodoxy are duly condemned without being specifically named. Both *Karra Haymanot* followers and their *Sost Līdāt* rivals would say 'Amen' to this without any hesitation. The second part (*hullāt līdāt; bātāwahdo kābbärrä Wäld bätälläyyä akalu qī'ib näw; bā-sawīnnatu yābahīry amalk; bā-sawīnnatu inndä A'ab indä Mānfās qīdus yawqal mawākiyyam näw*), was an unmistakable exposition of the *Kara Haymanot* teaching. The third part, albeit short, is directed toward explicitly condemning the other two factions who do not subscribe to the *Karra* version of Alexandrian Christology. The *Sost Līdāt* group (also depicted as 'Yäs'ägga Lij' in the letter) were the primary target. The *Qibat* group, without being addressed by name, had had their fair share of denunciation when the letter condemns those who say 'bā-qibat yābahīry lij' even though the Borumeda council didn't address the teaching of the group.

<sup>47</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 88.

<sup>48</sup> Translation mine.

Having already accepted the genuineness of the letter and publicly declaring their allegiance to the Alexandrian pope and his teachings, this letter would undoubtedly put the *Sost Lidät* party in a very untenable position. *Yäs 'ägga Lijočč* did not have any qualms with the first part of the prelate's confession, eternal sonship and incarnation that is. The second part (the portrayal of *Karra Haymanot* as Alexandrian orthodoxy) and the third part (which was the branding of the *Sost Lidät* theologians as heretics), nonetheless, were undoubtedly very problematic. The *Sost Lidät* theologians, without retracting their faith in the genuineness of the letter, strongly disputed that the Patriarch of Alexandria knowingly endorses the *Kara Haymanot* formula that Christ is 'God in His humanity' (*bä-säwinnätu yäbahiry Amlak*); blaming it on Tigrean foul-play for misleading the Alexandrian prelates who do not fully understand the intricacies of that country's theological tradition by putting words in their mouth; taking advantage of their geographical proximity to Egypt.<sup>49</sup> In the words of Gäbrä Sillase,

ይህም በፊታቸው በተነበበ ጊዜ የጸጋ ልጆች እንዲህ አሉ፡ትግሮች ጳጳስ ሲያመጡ ከመንገድ ቆይተው በሰውነቱ የባሕርይ አምላክ ያሰኙአቸዋል እንጂ ጳጳሳቱስ እንዲህ አይሉም አሉ።<sup>50</sup>

When this was read in front of them *Yäs 'ägga Lijočč* said when the Tigreans bring bishops [from Alexandria] they meet them half way [before they meet anyone else] and teach them to say 'God in his humanity'. Otherwise, the bishops would never say like this.<sup>51</sup>

It was not without precedent, however, that the followers of *Yäs 'ägga Lij* Christology accused the Tigreans of deviousness. According to the Ethiopian scholar Kidanä Wäld,

የጎንደሮች መንግሥት ዘውዱ ብቻ ሲቀር ግዛቱ ኹሉ ባ፩፯፻፸፯ ወደ መሳፍንት ከኹደ በኋላ ራስ ወልደ ሥላሴ ትግሬን ለብቻቸው ሲገዙ በርሳቸው ዘመን ከተንቤን ከደብረ ዳሞ ካባ ገሪማ ከነዚህ ከሦስቱ አህጉር አባ ኪኑ፤ ደብተራ በትሩ፤ አለቃ ዐምደ መንሱት የሚባሉ ሦስት ሐሳውያን ተነሥተው ፲፪ ክህደት ፈጥረው ጥፈው በኢትዮጵያ እንደዚህ የሚሉ ብዙ መናፍቃን ተነስተው አስቸግረውናል፤ የሊህም መረቻ አፋቸው የሚዘጋበት ወልድ ቅብዕ ማለት ነው ያለዚያ አይረቱምና ይህን ሃይማኖት አጽኑልን፤ የተላከ ከ፵፬ቱ አድባራት ከጎንደር ብለው ወደ ግብጽ ላኩ። . . . ግብጾችም ያባቶቻቸው ትምህርትና ቋንቋ በተንባላት ዘመን ዕልም ድርግም ብሎ ስለጠፋ

<sup>49</sup> As the northern apex of Ethiopia, Tigray was the first port of entry to the country for travellers coming from North Africa. The Tigreans, therefore, have the geographical advantage of meeting Alexandrian legations before they meet anyone else.

<sup>50</sup> C.f. Gäbrä Sillasse, *Tarik*, 88.

<sup>51</sup> Translation mine.

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

እውነት መስፈርቱ ተቀበሉት. . . ከዚህም የተነሣ የግብፅ ሃይማኖት ተብሎ ባዋጀ በግዝት የማርቆስን ስም ተቀብቶ እስከ ዛሬ ነግሟል<sup>52</sup>

After power, save the crown, was gone from Gondar to the princes in 1777 E.C (=1784/85); during Ras Wäldä Sillase's autonomous governorship of Tigray; three false teachers from the three [Tigrean] provinces of Tānben; Däbrä Damo and Abba Gärima; namely Abba Kinu; *Däbtära* Bätu and *Aläqa* Amdä Minsut wrote a letter to Egypt as if it were from 'the 44 Monasteries of Gondar.' They also invented twelve fabrications and, attributing them to heretics in Ethiopia that were causing a problem [to the Church], pleaded with the Egyptians to sanction the formula 'Christ is the unction' for this would be the only way to silence and beat these heretics. And the Egyptians innocently accepted this teaching for the language and knowledge of their Fathers had been completely and totally lost during the time of the Muslims. For this reason, it has been declared the Faith of Alexandria and enjoying the prestige of the Markan throne.<sup>53</sup>

To what extent, and by what means, Yohannīs (a Tigrean hard-core adherent of *Karra Haymanot*) had influenced the Patriarch of Alexandria to write such a letter would be difficult to say. However, given the emperor's ethnic background being Tigrean and holding a strong *Hullät Līdät* theology that characterised his region as well as the above historical precedent (courtesy of Kidanä Wäld), it seems to us, the *Sost Līdät* theologians' suspicion was justified. It begs credulity that the letter had the pastoral purpose of protecting the Ethiopian faithful from the 'heresies' of *Qibat* and *Yäs'ägga Lij* or the theological objective of clarifying the faith of Alexandria to the people further south beyond the borders of Egypt who so ardently revered the Coptic Patriarchs and meticulously followed their missives.<sup>54</sup> The Patriarch's epistle should, perhaps, better be regarded as having the more political objective of winning the allegiance of the Ethiopian emperor with the view of ensuring the loyalty of the Ethiopians to the Alexandrian Church, which despite its glorious past, was fighting for its survival under Islamic rule and suppression.

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<sup>52</sup> Kidanä Wäld, *Mäzgäbä Qalat*, 491.

<sup>53</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>54</sup> Munro-Hay has made a valid point that the downside of having Egyptian prelates who do not know the conditions and possibly the language of the country is that he would have little say on the imperial religious decrees. Cf. Munro-Hay, *Aksum*, 204. If the Egyptian metropolitans, whose mission had been to live amongst the people of Ethiopia; being a spiritual guide and overseers as well as the official representatives of the patriarch, struggled to get a grip on the subtlety of Ethiopian theology, It is no surprise that the Patriarch would not comprehend it. Incidentally, Pope Cyril V occupied the Markan throne in 1874 only four years before the Council of Borumeda.

The letter, it has to be said, though not suspect as to its authenticity, nevertheless had some eccentric features that would not be expected from the Patriarch's desk. To mention but a few, neither Eutyches nor the Council of Chalcedon, both of them rejected by the Alexandrian and Ethiopian Churches alike, were mentioned. Not even once. Moreover, while the letter rightly assumes the intended readers' familiarity with Nestorianism and Arianism, it surprisingly made no mention of the names of Athanasius the Great or Cyril, both of them former patriarchs of Alexandria, who made a landmark contribution to the development of Christology in general and, Alexandrian Christology in particular, in their respective fight against the Arian and Nestorian heresies. A very general reference to the religion of his predecessors (*käne bäfit bännäbbärut Abatoččaččīn haymanotinna miḡbar yäs'anna säw s'ägga Īgzyabher tidärrībāt*) was made in the introductory part of the letter but what exactly the nature of this 'religion' was and its relevance to the issue at hand in Ethiopia was not shown. Nor did Qerellos's letter follow the great hermeneutical tradition of the Alexandrian school, incidentally pioneered by Cyril of Alexandria, that takes into account the history of interpretation of a biblical passage or a Christian dogma before reaching its modern meaning or application. Given the schism in Ethiopia revolves around the issue of the anointment of Jesus, which Cyril of Alexandria recognised as a potential Nestorian problem in his discussion with Palladius, in a letter available to the Alexandrian Church, it surpasses imagination as to how the prelate failed either to cite Cyril to substantiate his position or to give the Coptic Church's reading of the contentious statement. In short, the Ethiopians seem to have a greater respect for Cyril and take his teachings more seriously than his countrymen. Furthermore, the letter neither employs the standard Christological terms that have become normative since the time of Cyril nor alludes to the wordings of the ecumenical councils, with the exception of the term 'Täwahdo', an epithet for the Ethiopian Church, which literally means 'union' (hypostatic union, that is).

For all practical purposes, Yohannīs' attempt to bring about national unity through the subscription by *Sost Lidät* exponents to an official doctrinal letter from the Alexandrian pope Cyril (Qerellos) had not been much of a success. At this junction, however, something dramatic happened that considerably tipped the balance toward the favourites, *Karra Haymanot*. Gäbrä Sillase recorded it but Admasu did not. The Īč'č'äge, a title given to the

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

chief Abbot of the Däbrä Libanos monastery and the highest ranked prelate (Metropolitan or Catholicos) was seated next to the monarchs as a judge but unexpectedly, probably undignifiedly, entered into the debate moving his chair next to the *Karra Haymanot* (*hullät lidät*) group as their main speaker.

በዚህን ጊዜ ክርክር ሲጀመር እጨጌ ቴዎፍሎስ ወንበርዎን አስወርደው በሊቀ ካህናት ኪዳነ ወልድ አጠገብ በቆሙት ሊቃውንት ወገን ተቀመጡ። ይህን ጊዜ ባላጋራችሁ እኔ ነኝ ከእኔ ጋራ ተከራክሩ አሉዋቸው፤ ሁለቱ ነገሥታት ዳኞች ሁነው እጨጌ ጥያቄ ጀመሩ። ከጠየቁም በኋላ እጨጌን መስለው ተከትለው ሊቃውንቱ አለቃ ኪዳነ ወልድ፤ አለቃ ተክለ ሥላሴ ጠየቁ፤ ጥያቄያቸውም ስልቱ ልዩ ልዩ ነው። ምሥጢሩም ብዙ ነው። ነገር ግን ሊጻፍ አይቻልምና ቀርቷል። ሶበሰ ተጽሕፈ በበጀ እምኢያግመሮ ዓለም እንዳለ።<sup>55</sup>

At this time when the debate began, Īč’č’äge Tewoflos, took your chair and sat next to the scholars who were standing with Archpriest Kidanä Wäld. At that moment you said to them (to the *Sost Lidät* scholars), ‘I am your foe, argue with me.’ Both monarchs were presiding as judges and the Īč’č’äge began questioning. After him, the (*Karra*) scholars, Aläqa Kidanä Wäld [and] Aläqa Täklä Sillase asked like the Īč’č’äge. Their questions as well as methods were varied. The mystery was deep. But all could not be written and is left out. As [Scripture says] even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.<sup>56</sup>

Given ‘Īč’č’äge’ was the traditional title given to the Abbot of the Däbrä Libanos monastery and Admasu’s doubt if Däbrä Libanos indeed was the nerve centre for *Sost Lidät* theology, the prelate’s question and the defendants’ reply would have shed light on the place of Däbrä Libanese thought in Ethiopian theology. That, unfortunately, did not happen, as Gäbrä Sillase left it out and other sources did not pick it up. The next time we heard from Tewoflos was when he was pleading with the emperor for moderation after the latter, who was a die-hard *Hullät Lidät* monarch, was aggravated by the impulsive response from two of the front-bench *Sost Lidät* group when questioned by the main speaker of *Hullät Lidät*, Kidanä Wäld. After Īč’č’äge Tewoflos, it was Aläqa Kidanä Wäld’s turn to ask.

የመዝናኛው ጥያቄ ለኹለት ልደቶች ኸነና አፈ ጉባኤው አለቃ ኪዳነ ወልድ ተጠየቅ ልጠይቀህ ሥላሴ በአካል ቺ ናቸው ሲሉ ጠየቁ።  
አለቃ ሥነ ጊዮርጊስም አዎን ሥላሴ በአካል ቺ ናቸው ሲሉ መለሱ።  
ጀተኛ ጥያቄ፡ ሥላሴ በክብር ዕሩያን ናቸው አየበላለጡም አሉ።  
መልስ፡ አዎን ሥላሴ በክብር ዕሩያን ናቸው አይበላለጡም ሲሉ መለሱ።  
ቺተኛ ጥያቄ፡ ሥላሴ በከዊን ህልውና ከመገናዘብ በቀር አንዱ ባንዱ አያድርም አሉ።

<sup>55</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 88.

<sup>56</sup> Translation mine.

መልስ፡ አዎን በከዊን ህልውና ከመገናኘብ በቀር አንዱ አካል ባንዱ አካል አይደርም አለ።<sup>57</sup>

The first question was given to the *Hullät Lüdät*.

The speaker Aläqa Kidanä Wäld asked, 'Is the Trinity three in person? Yes or no?'

Aläqa Sīnā Giyorgis replied, 'Yes, the Trinity is three in person'.

Second question: he said are the Trinity equal and there is no superiority or inferiority between them?

Response: 'The Trinity are equal and there is no inferiority or superiority between them'.

Third question: 'Other than sharing the same divinity, one of the persons of the Trinity would not inhabit the other person.'

Answer: Yes other than sharing in the same divinity (Greek = *ousia*), one person does not inhabit the other person.<sup>58</sup>

Kidanä Wäld began his questions with the doctrine of the Trinity rather than Christology. Even though the mystery of the Trinity (*Mist'irä Sillase*) and Christology (*Mist'irä Sīgawe*) are closely linked, it could, perhaps, as well be a tactical move to entrap the *Sost Lüdät* speaker who seems unable to foresee where this line of argument was heading. This naivety on the part of the *Sost Lüdät* chief speaker, Aläqa Sīnā Giyorgis, had been shared by all representatives throughout this debate to such an extent that no credible challenge had been mounted by any one of them to alleviate the onslaught by *Hullät Lüdät* theologians. The co-equality and full divinity of each and every person of the Trinity was accepted by both groups expectedly without any reservation as none of them were Unitarians. The explosive question came when Akalä Wäld raised the question of *perichoresis*. If our understanding of Kidanä Wäld's question is correct, he maintained that whilst the persons of the Trinity share *the* same Godhead or *ousia* (*yäkäwin mäggänazäb*), it cannot be said that there is a mutual indwelling or interpenetration (*ayadīrim*) of the persons with one another. This was particularly troublesome for the *Yäs'ägga Lījočč* because of their understanding of the anointment of Jesus by the Holy Spirit as a reception of and indwelling by the Holy Spirit, unlike the *Karra* counterparts who equate anointing with union. In our view, that was the last line of defence for the *Sost Lüdät* theologians and should have staunchly been defended as a matter of life and death. As it turned out, Sīnā Giyorgis consented that there is no mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity after which Kidanä Wäld landed a fatal blow on the *S'äggočč* when he asked his fourth question.

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<sup>57</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 280.

<sup>58</sup> Translation mine.

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

፩ተኛ ጥያቄ፤ አንተ ከራስህ አቅንተህ ከቺቱ አንዱ አካል ቃል ሥጋ በኾነ ጊዜ መንፈስ ቅዱስ አደረበት፤ መንፈስ ቅዱስን ተቀብሎ የጸጋ ልጅ ኾነ እያልክ ታስተማራለህ? ሲሉ ጠየቁ። አለቃ ሥነ ጊዮርጊስ መልስ ሳይሰጡ ዝም አሉ።<sup>59</sup>

Fourth question: On your own accord, you teach that when one of the persons of the Trinity, the Word, became flesh, the Holy Spirit indwelt him; after receiving the Spirit, he became the Son of God by grace (*bäs'ägga yäbiry lij*). Aläqa Sinä Giyorgis refrained from answering.<sup>60</sup>

In fairness, if the *Sost Lidät* adherents had any hope of winning the day at the beginning of the council, it was all finished at this moment. The damage has been done and Aläqa Sinä Giyorgis' silence said it all. What seemed so vividly clear to Sinä Giyorgis, unfortunately, however, was not so obvious to the Ḫngäda brothers, Zur Amba and Waldbe, the second and third speakers of the *Sost Lidät* party, who blurted out that they call Jesus the 'Son of the Trinity' in addition to, if not possibly in lieu of, the 'Son of God' at their own peril.

ዋልድቤ እንግዳ፤ ዙር አምባ እንግዳ የተባሉ መነኮሳት አብረዋቸው ቆመው ነበርና ኹለቱም ባንድ ቃል አዎን ወልደ ሥላሴ እንለዋለን ብለው በድፍረት ተናገሩ። በዚህ ጊዜ ዐጼ ዮሐንስ 'ዐራት አምላክ ማለታችሁ ነው?' ብለው ተቆጡ። ዕጩጌ ቴዎፍሎስም ጃንሆይ ዳኝነት መስማት ነው እንጂ መቆጣት የለብዎትም ብለው ተናገሩ።<sup>61</sup>

Wallibe Ḫngäda and Zur Amba Ḫngäda, two monks who were standing next to Sinä Giyorgis, in one voice defiantly said 'We call him the Son of the Trinity' (*Wäldä Sillasse*).

At this time Emperor Yohannīs got annoyed and said 'Do you mean four Gods?' But Ḫč'ägge Tewoflos said, 'Your Majesty, a judge is supposed to patiently listen and should not get annoyed'.<sup>62</sup>

Even though God has always existed as a triune, a three-in-one, there is a difference between calling Jesus the Son of God and the Son of the Trinity that amounts to the confusion of *persona* with that of *ousia*. The former is what makes each member of the Trinity a unique person and the latter is what all the persons of God share in common, a divine substance or being. *Persona* differentiates but *ousia* unites the Godhead. It was in his unique person (*bätälläyā akalu*) that God the Father became the Father of the eternal Son, who in his own unique person, that was distinctly different from both the Father and the Holy Spirit, he was incarnated and became a human being. The result of confusing the individual *hypostasis* of the persons (*akal*) with the divine *ousia* (*käwin*), as Yohannīs rationally understood but irrationally reacted, was quadrinity rather than Trinity (four persons instead of three).

<sup>59</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 280.

<sup>60</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>61</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 280.

<sup>62</sup> Translation mine.

The exchanges between Kidanä Wäld and Sinä Giyorgis concluded with *Hullät Lidätočč* getting the upper hand, and the second speaker for the *Karra* side, Täklä Sillasse, began to ask. He summarised in a nutshell the theology of *Hullät Lidät*, faith in the two births of Christ: eternal generation from the Father and biological birth from his mother Mary, from the Scriptures, the Old and the New. He used one of the Messianic Psalms (“I will proclaim the LORD’s decree: He said to me, ‘You are my son; today I have become your father’.” Psalms 2:7) as an allusion to the eternal generation of the Son and a verse from one of the Pauline epistles (‘But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship’ Galatians 4:4-5) for his second birth.

አለቃ ተክለ ሥላሴ ቀረኝ ብለው ሃይማኖት በብሉይ በሐዲስ ተነግሯል ተጽፏል ብለው ጠየቁ።  
መልስ፡ አዎን፤ ተነግሯል ተጽፏል አሉ።  
ጥያቄ፡ በብሉይ ወልድያ አንተ ተብሎ ቀዳማዊ ልደቱ፤ ወዘነ ዮም ወለድኩክ ተብሎ ደኃራዊ ልደቱ ተነግሯል አሉ።  
መልስ፡ አዎን ተነግሯል አሉ።  
ጥያቄ፡ በሐዲስም ፈነወ ወልድ ተብሎ ቀዳማዊ ልደቱ፤ ወተወልደ አምብእሲት ተብሎ ደኃራዊ ልደቱ ተነግሯል።  
መልስ፡ አዎን ተነግሯል አሉ።  
ጥያቄ፡ ቅድመ ዓለም ከአብ ደኅረ ዓለም ከእመቤታችን መወለዱን ካመንክኝ፤ ኸለት ልደት ማለት ይህ ነዋ! ብለው አሳዩ።  
ምስጢሩ ጥልቅ ኾኖ ለሰሚ የማይረዳ ስለኾነ ኸሉም ዝም አለ።<sup>63</sup>

Aläqa Täklä Sillase added, ‘Is it written [about true] religion in the Old and New Testaments?’

Answer: Yes, it is written, it is taught.

Question: Was his first birth told in the Old Testament when it says ‘You are my Son’ and his second birth when it says ‘Today, I beget you’?

Answer: Yes, it was told.

Question: in the New Testament, his first birth was told when it says ‘He sent his son’ and his second birth by saying ‘Born from a woman’

Answer: Yes it is told.

Question: Then, if you agree with me about his birth from the Father before [the foundation of] the world and his birth from Our Lady after [the creation of] the world, that is what *Hullät Lidät* (two-births) is all about.

Everyone kept quiet for they hadn’t understood what was said because of the depth of its [theological] secret (*mist’iru*).<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 280-281.

<sup>64</sup> Translation mine.



#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

Sīnā Giyorgis had no problem accepting Tāklā Sīllase's premises for the Christology of *S'ägga* adds a third birth on top of the universally agreed two births which *Karra Haymanot* accepted. Tāklā Sīllase achievement was to firmly place the burden of proof for the third birth solely on the shoulders of the *Sost Līdāt* rivals. This was an opportunity to explain the tenets of three births accompanied by proof texts from the bible as well as patristic literature, not least Cyril of Alexandria himself, with the view of redressing *Hullāt Līdāt* ascendancy that had been taken for granted given the emperor's loyalty and the group's poor showing in answering Kidanā Wäld. But the challenge was not forthcoming.

Māl'akä Bīrhan<sup>65</sup> Wäldä Yohannīs, the third speaker and, arguably, the most eloquent of all the representatives of *Karra* at the council, was next to put questions to the *S'äggočč*. Born in Shoa, he received his first theological education, poetry (*qīne*) in Dima Giyorgis, Gojjam under the famous teacher Tāklā S'iyon before he went back to his hometown to study patristics (*Liqawint*) under Aläqa Gäbrä Iyyäsus.<sup>66</sup> In our view, the first part of his question, that is, the metaphor about the wealth of the king registered in a letter, did not seem to have much relevance to the issue at hand and, possibly, its syllogisms could have at some point been questioned and its progress to the conclusion halted. It should be said, however, that his approach was hailed by and grabbed the attention of Gäbrä Sīllase, who chose to skip the questions of the *İč'č'äge* and the first two speakers on the grounds of shortage of space and profundity.<sup>67</sup> According to the royal chronicler, asking first about the Trinity and, then, a follow-on question on the incarnation is similar to building a strong and reliable foundation before embarking on the construction of the rest of the building.<sup>68</sup>

፫ተኛ መልአክ ብርሃን ወልደ ዮሐንስ ቀረኝ ብለው ጠየቁ  
ጥያቄ፤ የንጉሥ ገንዘብ ተሰፍሮ ተቆጥሮ በመዝገብ ይጻፋል?  
መልስ፡ አዎን ተሰፍሮ ተቆጥሮ በመዝገብ ይጻፋል?  
ጥያቄ፤ በመዝገብ ከተጻፈው ያጎደለም ያተረፈም ይቀጣል?  
መልስ፤ ያጎደለም ያተረፈም ይቀጣል አዎን።

ጥያቄ፤ የሥላሴ ገንዘባቸው ሃይማኖት ነው?

<sup>65</sup> His name is Wäldä Yohannīs. Māl'akä Bīrhan (=Angel of Light) his ecclesiastical title usually given to scholars of the Ethiopian Church.

<sup>66</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 279.

<sup>67</sup> Gäbrä Sīllase, *Minilik*, 89.

<sup>68</sup> Gäbrä Sīllase, *Minilik*, 89.

መልስ፡ አዎን፤ የሥላሴ ገንዘባቸው ሃይማኖት ነው።  
ጥያቄ፡ የሥላሴ ገንዘብ ሃይማኖት ተሰፍሮ ተቆጥሮ በመጽሐፍ ተጽፏል?  
መልስ፡ አዎን፤ የሥላሴ ገንዘብ ሃይማኖት ተሰፍሮ ተቆጥሮ በመጽሐፍ ተጽፏል።  
ጥያቄ፡ ከመጽሐፍ ቃል ያጎደለም ያተረፈም ይቀጣል?  
መልስ፡ አዎን፤ ያጎደለም ያተረፈም ይቀጣል።  
ጥያቄ፡ መጽሐፍ ነአምን ፪ ልደታት ብሎ በአኃዝ ወስኖ ነግሮናል?  
መልስ፡ አዎን መጽሐፍ ነአምን ክሌኤተ ልደታት ይላል።  
በዚህ ጊዜ ጠያቂው ከመጽሐፍት ቃል ያተረፈም ያጎደለም የሚቀጣ ከኾነ፤ መጽሐፍ ጠንቅቆ ነአምን ክሌኤተ ልደታት ብሎ ወስኖ ከተናገረ፤ አንተ ከዚህ አልፈህ ተርፈህ ፫ ልደታት እያልክ ስታስተምር ከተገኘህ ትቀጣልኛለህ ሲሉ ውርድ ነዙ።<sup>69</sup>

Third speaker, Mäli'akä Bīrhan Wäldä Yohannīs asked saying

Question: Is the wealth of a king recorded in accounts after inventory?

Answer: Yes, we take inventory and record it in the accounts.

Question: Whoever subtracts from [his wealth] or adds to [his wealth] will be culpable?

Answer: Yes, whoever subtracts from or adds to will be culpable.

Question: Religion is the property of the Trinity?

Answer: Yes, religion is the property of the Trinity.

Question: The property of the Trinity is counted and recorded in a book?

Answer: Yes, the property of the Trinity is counted and recorded in a book.

Question: Whoever subtracts from or adds to the words of the Book is culpable?

Answer: Yes whoever subtracts from or adds to is culpable.

Question: Does the Scripture definitively tell us that we believe in two births?

Answer: Yes, Scripture says 'We believe in two births'.

This time, the asker said if anyone who subtracts from or adds to what is in Scripture is culpable; if the scripture definitively says 'We believe in two births; and if you are found teaching a third birth over and above this, then you deserve punishment. I rest my case.'<sup>70</sup>

The most obvious difference between Täklä Sillase and Wäldä Yohannīs was the addition of the qualifier 'definitively' by the latter. Sīnā Giyorgis could easily have agreed with Täklä Sillase about the two births of Christ without necessarily denouncing his three births Christology. That was not the case with Wäldä Sillase, however. Accepting the Scripture has 'definitively' told us about two births, nothing more or nothing less, was theologically suicidal as it rules out any room whatsoever for the third birth. The first round of questions went very well for the *Hullät Lüdät* group but their *Sost Lüdät* rivals did seem resigned to the inevitability of defeat.

We know Täklä Sillase substantiated his argument from the Bible as he explicitly cited the Old Testament (Psalms 27) as well as the New Testament (Galatians 4) to show that *Hullät*

<sup>69</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 281.

<sup>70</sup> Translation mine.

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

*Lidät* Christology is thoroughly and clearly grounded on the teachings of the prophets and the apostles. Similarly, Wäldä Yohannīs claimed a Scriptural source for his *nä'amīn kill'etä lidätat* (We believe in two births). But this is glaringly of a different genre than the ones we have in the Bible and is, indeed, unmistakably a creedal formula that would not be found anywhere in the Bible.

The proceedings of what transpired next were somewhat different between Gäbrä Sillase's account and that of Admasu. First, according to Admasu, when it was Sīnā Giyorgis's turn to interrogate the *Hullät Lidät* exponents, Emperor Yohannīs denied him a fair hearing for fear of being led astray or confused should this question and answer method be allowed to carry on unabated, and ordered Sīnā Giyorgis and colleagues to bring forth a proof-text for the third birth (*Sost Lidät*) they came to be associated with.

አለቃ ሥነ ጊዮርጊስ መልሰው ተጠየቅ አለ። ዐጼ ዮሐንስ የለም ልታሳስቱኝ ነው። ተጠየቅ ይቅርና፤ እርሱ በአኃዝ ነአምን ክልኤተ ልደታት ብሎ ቈጥሮ እንዳስረዳ አንተም ቪ ልደት የሚል ንባብ አምጣ ብለው ተናገሩ።<sup>71</sup>

Alāqa Sīnā Giyorgis said 'Question for you!'. [But] Emperor Yohannīs said 'No, you are going to mislead me. Stop [this] question and answer and supply a text which says three births just like he elaborated his position using a text that definitively says "We believe in two births"'.<sup>72</sup>

Yet, Gäbrä Sillase maintains that Emperor Yohannīs ordered the *Sost Lidät* party to substantiate their claim only after Wäldä Yohannīs refused to be probed by Sīnā Giyorgis and party after declaring an early victory. Both Admasu and Gäbrä Sillase, however, have noted that it was Däjazmač Wäldä Mika'el's plea to Emperor Yohannīs on behalf of the *Sost Lidät* group that threw them a life line. Gäbrä Sillase credited both monarchs with the granting of the request.

በዚያን ጊዜ ፈንታችንን መልሰን እንጠይቅ ቢሉ መልአክ ብርሃን በዚህ ባመንኸው ቃል ተረታ እንግዲህ ምን ጥያቄ አለህ ቢል ደጃዝማች ወልደ ሚካኤል ተነስቶ በአገራችን አንዱ ጠይቆ አንዱ ሳይጠይቅ አንፈርድም፤ ጃንሆይ ግን እንዳወቁ ብሎ ተቀመጠ። ነገሥታቱም ፈንታቸውን ይጠይቁ ብለው ፈቀዱላቸው።<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Admasu, *Zikrā Liqawint*, 281.

<sup>72</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>73</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 90.

*He was Anointed Because He was Incarnated*

At that time, when they (*Sost Līdāt* group) said it was their turn to ask, Māl’akā Bīrhan insisted that you should not have any question; just concede based on what you already affirmed (that the Scripture definitively teaches two births). But Dājazmač Wäldä Mika’el stood up and said ‘In our country, we do not give a verdict without hearing both sides. Of course your Majesty knows better’ and sat down. And the monarchs allowed them to ask in their turn.<sup>74</sup>

For Admasu, the plea was made directly to Yohanniś and it was the sole decision of the emperor to grant the application.

በዚህ ጊዜ የልዑል ራስ መኮንን አባት ደጃች ወልደ ሚካኤል አስተዋይ ሰው ነበሩና ብድግ ብለው ተነስተው ጃንሆይ እነዚህኞቹ እየተፈራረቁ ሲጠይቁ ቆይተዋል፤ እነዚህን ጥያቄ ብንከለክላቸውማ ዳኝነት ይጎድልብን የለምን ብለው አመለከቱ። ዐፄ ዮሐንስም የደጃዝማች ወልደ ሚካኤልን ቃል ተቀብለው ደግ ነው ይጠይቅ አሉ።<sup>75</sup>

At this time, Dājjač Wäldä Mika’el, the father of Prince Ras Mäkonniñ<sup>76</sup> got up from his seat and appealed to the Emperor saying, ‘Your Majesty, these ones have had their turn to ask their questions one after another. It would be injustice if we denied the other group their turn to ask’. Emperor Yohanniś listened to the words of Dājazmač Wäldä Mika’el and said ‘That’s fine; let him (Sīna Giyorgis, that is) ask’.<sup>77</sup>

Swapping roles from being questioned to a questioner did not improve the performance of the *Sost Līdätočč* either. With respect to the first question raised by the *Sost Līdāt* group, our original sources differ significantly. Admasu maintained Sīnā Giyorgis wanted to ask about the effects of the Fall on Mary and Jesus with a view of establishing the need for the grace of sonship which Adam lost. But Wäldä Yohanniś, anticipating where the argument was heading, cleverly and intentionally twisted Sīnā Giyorgis’ thoughts and replied there is nothing common between a human mother born from human biological parents and her divine son who was miraculously born without the seed of a human father.

ከዚህ በኋላ አለቃ ሥነ ጊዮርጊስ ተጠየቅ አሉና እናትና ልጁን ልደት እንጂ ያገናኛቸዋል ሲሉ ጠየቁ። አለቃ ሥነ ጊዮርጊስ እንዲህ ብለው መጠየቃቸው እመቤታችን አዳም አስወሰዶት የነበረውን የጸጋ ልደት እንደሌላው ሰው ሁሉ ተወልዳለች፤ ልጅዋንም እንደርሷ የጸጋ ልደት ተወለደ ይህ ያገናኛቸዋል ለማለት ነበረ። ወልደ ዮሐንስ ግን ካፋቸው ጠለፍ አድርገው፤ ኸሉ ወደሚያውቀው ወደ ግዙፉ ወደ ልደት ሥጋ ለውጠው አባዬ አባዬ ያራዳ መምህር፤ የርሷ ልደት በዘርዕ በሩካቤ፤ የርሱ እንበለ ዘርዕ ምን አገናኛቸው ብለው መለሱ።<sup>78</sup>

After that Aläqä Sīnā Giyorgis uttered ‘Let me ask you’ and said ‘What did the mother and the son share in common with respect to their [respective] birth? Sīnā Giyorgis’ intention in

<sup>74</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>75</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 281.

<sup>76</sup> Ras Mäkonniñ was the father of Ras Täfäri, later Emperor Haile Sillase of Ethiopia (1930-1974).

<sup>77</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>78</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 281-282.

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

asking this question was to say that our Lady shares the same birth by grace, which Adam had and lost, with her son. But Wäldä Yohannis interrupted and, changing it to the physical birth everybody understands, said, her birth was a result of sexual intercourse; he was born without sperm; what commonality would be there between them?<sup>79</sup>

Lämma expands this point to include the names of both Mary's parents (እሷ የሐና የአያቱም ልጅ። She was the daughter of Anna and Joachim<sup>80</sup>). Gäbrä Sillase, on the other hand, recorded a totally different narrative. In this version of the story, it was just one of the *Däbtäras* (church musicians who are, mostly, famous for practising traditional healing and black magic) rather than one of the main speakers on *S'äggočč*. The question in both variants revolved around a theme that was at the heart of *Sost Lidät* theology; namely, the immediate effect of the Fall on Adam and its long-term implication on his descendants in general but especially on the Virgin Mary and her son Jesus. Sīnā Giyorgis' question was short in articulation and, at least in the eyes of Wäldä Yohannis, did not merit a proper response. The *Däbtära*, in contrast, was able to get some concession from the *Hullät Lidät* on key points of Adam's pre- and post-Fall status but crumbled under the grandeur of the royal court (*Nigus čilot*), shrewdness of the speaker and pressure from the crowd before getting the chance to substantiate his doctrine from the Scripture or patristic literature.

ከዚህ በኋላ ከሶስት ልደቶች አንዱ ደብተራ ሲጠይቅ እንዲህ አለ። እግዚአብሔር አዳምን በነፍስ ሕያው አድርጎ ሲፈጥረው በመንፈስ ቅዱስ አክብሮት የጸጋ ልጅ አድርጎ አኖረው ብሎ ሲጠይቀው መልአክ ብርሐን አዎን ብሎ መለሰ። ዳግመኛም ሥርዓቱን እንጂ ቢያፈርስ ነው ልጅነቱ የሄደበት ቢለው አዎን ብሎ መለሰ። ሶስተኛም ሕጉን እንጂ ጠብቆ ቢኖር በኩራችን ይሆን ነበር ቢለው፤ ይሆን ነበር የሚሉ ጥያቄ በሁለቱ ነገሥታት ፊት አልጠየቅም አለው።<sup>81</sup>

After this a *Däbtära*, one of the *Sost Lidätočč* asked 'When God created Adam as a living soul, was he not glorified by the Holy Spirit and made him son by grace (*yäs'ägga lij*)? Mäl'akä Bīrhan replied affirmatively. Secondly, when he asked him 'did He lose his sonship because he breached the ordinances [of God]?' he answered favourably. [But] thirdly when he said to him 'would he not have been our firstborn had he observed the ordinances?', [Wäldä Yohannis] replied 'I could not be asked a hypothetical question in front of the two monarchs'.<sup>82</sup>

That brings us to the conclusion of the Council. For Lämma, this was the turning point of the debate. The next thing to happen was the issuance of a verdict that was favourable for

<sup>79</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>80</sup> Lämma, *Tizzita*, 157.

<sup>81</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 90-92.

<sup>82</sup> Translation mine.

the winning party of *Hullät Lidät* followed by the arresting of the *Sost Lidät* leaders to appear after three days. Almost all of them except the *İngida* brothers, *Waldbe* and *Zur Amba*, recanted *Sost Lidät* confessing their long-standing cravings to accept *Hullät Lidät* had it not been for fear of bullying by the *Karra* faithful.

ኋላ ውርድ ይድረስ ተባለ። ትሉታላችሁ፤ ትለቃላችሁ! ያለው መኳንንቱ አጤ የሐንስ ዘንድ። እንግዲህ መጣፍ የሌለ ሆነ ሦስት ልደት የሚል። ሦስት ልደት የሚል አልተገኘም። ሁለት ልደትማ መልአክ ብርሐን ቆጥረውታል-ሃይማኖተ አበውን። ይማኖተ አበውን። የጸጋ ልጆቹ ተረቱ፤ እጅ እጃቸውን ተያዙ። በሦስተኛው ቀን ቅረቡ አሏቸው ሁሉንም ቀረቡ። እነዚያ ሦስት ልደቶች ሁለት ልደት ተዋህዶ ብለን እናምናለን ስትሉ ተገዙቱ ሲሏቸው ጊዜ 'እነሱ አየተሳደቡ ነው እንጂ ሁለት ልደት ተዋህዶ ማለትን መች ጠላነው ነበረ' አሉ።<sup>83</sup>

It was time for a verdict. The nobilities [sitting] beside Emperor Yohannis said [to *Sost Lidätočč*] 'You are the losers and will be removed [from office].' Well, there was nothing in the Scriptures that says '*Sost Lidät*'. Nothing was found that affirms *Sost Lidät*. As to *Hullät Lidät*, *Mäl'akä Bırhan* [*Wäldä Yohannis*] have counted it (i.e. have shown) [from] *Haymanotä Abäw. Yäs'ägga Lijočč* lost and each one of them was arrested. They told them to appear on the third day and they all appeared. When these *Sost Lidätočč* were asked to recant pledging to confess *Hullät Lidät* [is] *Täwahdo* (literally 'Hypostatic union' but meant 'Cyrillo-Alexandrian Orthodoxy'), they said, 'had it not been for their (*Hullät Lidät*) slur we would not mind confessing *Hullät Lidät* [is] *Täwahdo*.'<sup>84</sup>

For *Gäbrä Sillase*, too, this was the exact moment where the *Sost Lidätočč* was defeated.

ሦስት ልደቶች የሚመልሱት ምላሽ አጥተው ተረቱ። በ፪ ልደት ሃይማኖተ እንገባለን አሉ፤ ተፈጠሙ። ከዚህ በኋላ ሁለት ልደት በተዋህዶ ከበረ፤ በሰውነቱ የባሕርይ አምላክ፤ በሰውነቱ እንደ አብ እንደ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ያውቃል ማወቂያም ነው፤ ወልድ በተለየ አካሉ ቅብ ነው እንገለጽ እያሉ ተገዙቱ። በወንጌል በመስቀል ማሉ።<sup>85</sup>

The *Sost Lidätočč* had nothing more to say and they were defeated. They said they will join the *Hullät Lidät* religion. After this they confessed, 'two births, he was glorified by the union'; 'truly God in his humanity'; 'He was omniscient in his humanity like the Father and the Holy Spirit and he is the agent of knowing' and 'the Son is the anointed one in his unique person'. They took an oath with the Gospel as well as with the cross.<sup>86</sup>

According to *Admasu*, nonetheless, the royals realising that the question and answer sessions did not go well for *Yäs'ägga Lijočč*, gave them a chance to ascertain their faith in the need for and the reality of the additional birth by producing a proof-text from the Scripture. *Sinä Giyorgis*, to *Yohannis*' dismay, stretched the boundaries of canonicity, beyond recognition, to include *Tä'amrä Maryam* as an authoritative source for doctrine.

<sup>83</sup> Lämna, *Tizzita*, 157.

<sup>84</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>85</sup> *Gäbrä Sillase*, *Minilik*, 90-92.

<sup>86</sup> Translation mine.

#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

When probed further, they simply admitted *Sost Lidät* could not be found in the proceedings of the four councils.

በዚህ ጊዜ አደባባይ ያለው ሰው ኸሉ ሳቀ አደነቀ። ዐፄ ዮሐንስም ነገሩ እንዳላመረ አዩትና ተጠየቁ ቀርቶ ወልደ ዮሐንስ ፪ ልደት የሚል ምስክር ከመጽሐፍ እንዳመጣ አንተም ፫ ልደት የሚል ደረቅ ንባብ አምጣ አሏቸው። አለቃ ሥነ ጊዮርጊስም በደብረ ብርሃን ተአምረ ማርያም ተጽፏል አሉ። ከምታስተምረው ከዐራቱ ጉባኤ አጣህና ስለሃይማኖት ተአምረ ማርያምን ትጠቅሳለህ ቢሏቸው፣ ከጉባኤው መጽሐፍስ የለም አሉ።<sup>87</sup>

At this time every one present in the square laughed and admired [Wäldä Yohannis]. Emperor Yohannis, seeing it was not going very well [for *Yäs'ägga Lidätočč*], told Sīnä Giyorgis to produce a clear text (*däräq nibab*)<sup>88</sup> that shows three births (*sost lidät*), just as Wäldä Yohannis had produced Scriptural evidence for two births (*hullät lidät*) in lieu of questions and answers. Aläqa Sīnä Giyorgis replied 'It was written in Däbrä Bīrhan'<sup>89</sup> Miracles of Mary'. When he (Yohannis) [mocked him] (Sīnä Giyorgis) saying 'do you quote from the Miracles of Mary about doctrine failing to find evidence from the [proceedings] of the four [ecumenical] councils you are teaching about?', Sīnä Giyorgis said, 'It is not in the books of the four councils'.<sup>90</sup>

Given the Ethiopian Church's rejection of the Council of Chalcedon, otherwise commonly known as the 'Fourth Ecumenical Council', that has widely been recognised by Western (Catholic and Protestant) as well as Eastern (Orthodox) Churches, it is appropriate, at this point, to ask which four councils were referred to. The Ethiopian Church recognises, in collaboration with the rest of the mainstream Churches the first three councils, namely, the Nicaean Council, the Constantinople Council and the Council of Ephesus. The council, which the Ethiopian Church recognised as the 'fourth', along with her Oriental Orthodox sister Churches but rejected by the rest of Christendom, was Patriarch Dioscorus's Second Council of Ephesus which came to be remembered as the *Latrocinium*.

Technically, with Sīnä Giyorgis' admission that he could not produce biblical or patristic evidence to substantiate his three-birth theology (*Sost Lidät*) the debate was over. But Admasu tells us that King Mīnīlik proposed to adjourn the council, probably, to discuss

<sup>87</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 282.

<sup>88</sup> Literally 'Dry passage'.

<sup>89</sup> A copy of the Manuscript of *Tä'amrä Mariyam* (The Miracles of Mary) belonging to a monastery in the city of Däbrä Bīrhan, that is.

<sup>90</sup> Translation mine.

with Yohannis the best way forward now that *Hullät Lidät* had prevailed at the expense of *Sost Lidät*.

**በዚህ ጊዜ ዐፄ ምኒልክ ነገሩ ይደርና እንመካከርበት አለ። ዐፄ ዮሐንስም ደግ ነው ይደር ብለው ፈቀዱ።<sup>91</sup>**

This time Mīnīlik said, let this matter be adjourned overnight and discuss it. Emperor Yohannis allowed [the council] to be adjourned saying ‘That is fine’<sup>92</sup>.

A quick thinking priest on the side of the *Hullät Lidät* party, Wäldäyäs<sup>93</sup>, however, realised this was bad for the winning party as it was an ideal opportunity for the losers either to regroup or escape, as did Täklä Sillase. He used the metaphor of the ancient custom of cutting off the genitals of a dead enemy or castration as a trophy among some peoples of Ethiopia to alert Wäldä Yohannis that the job was not properly done until his enemies were condemned. Wäldä Yohannis got the message and acted swiftly.

**መምሬ ወልደየስ የተባለ የወግዳ ቄስ አብሮ ቆሞ ነበርና ወልደ ዮሐንስ የገደልከው ጋላ ሳትሰልበው አመለጠህ ብሎ ጮኾ ተናገረ፤ መልአክ ብርሃን ወልደ ዮሐንስም ነገሩ ገባቸውና ጃንሆይ ቄስ አ፩ አብ ቅዱስ ብሎ ከባረከው በኋላ መሥዋእት እንደማይድር ንጉሥም ካከራከረና ካመሳከረ በኋላ ፍርድ ሊያድር አየገባውምና በቆስጠንጢኖስ ዳኝነት ይገድዳልሁ ይህ ፍርድ አይደርብኝ ሲሉ አመለከቱ። ዐፄ ዮሐንስም ደግ ነው ይፋረዱ፤ አስፈርድ ሲሉ አዘዙ። ባደባባይ የተቀመጠው ኹሉ ባንድ ቃል ከመጽሐፍ ያላገኛችሁትን በማስመሰል ሰውን ሁሉ ስታስክዱ ኖራችኋልና ትቀጣላችሁ እያለ በእነ አለቃ ሥነ ጊዮርጊስ ፈረደባቸው። ባለ ፍትሐ ነገሥቱ ሊቄ መርዓዊም ፬ አካላት ካላችሁ ትቀጣላችሁ ሲሉ ፈርደውባቸዋል።<sup>94</sup>**

A priest from Wägida named Mämre<sup>95</sup> Wäldäyäs, who was standing among [the *Hullät Lidätočč*] loudly said, ‘Wäldä Yohannis, you forgot to castrate the Galla you killed!’ Mäl’akä Bīrhan Wäldä Yohannis understood the matter and appealed to the Emperor saying ‘Your Majesty, just like a sacrifice cannot be kept overnight after it was blessed by a priest, it is not appropriate for a verdict to be adjourned after a king has heard both parties. I urge you in Constantine’s justice, not to postpone verdict.’ Emperor Yohannis ordered ‘That’s fine, let the [audience] give the verdict.’ Everyone sitting at the roundabout unanimously condemned Sīnā Giyorgis and friends for misleading the multitude with [a doctrine] they pretended to have found from the Scripture. Even the law expert (*balä Fītha Nāgäst liq*) Mär’awi condemned them saying, if you spoke of four persons [in the Trinity], you should be punished.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 282.

<sup>92</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>93</sup> Wäldäyäs is a short form for ‘Wäldä Iyyäsus’.

<sup>94</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 282.

<sup>95</sup> Mämre, literally meaning ‘My Teacher’ is an honorary title given for lay teachers of religion.

<sup>96</sup> Translation mine.



#### Chapter 4: Alexandrian Christology Prescribed

Yohannis saved the worst to the last. At the conclusion of the council, according to Admasu, Yohannis decided to punish Waldibe and his brother Zur Amba by amputating their limbs and tongues for blaspheming against God by hastily calling Jesus the Son of the Trinity. His extreme response was a shock to everyone at the Council including their foes who earnestly but unsuccessfully pleaded for moderation.

ዐጄ ዮሐንስም በፈጣሪዬ ላይ በድፍረት ያልኾነ ቃል ተናግረዋልና የአካል ቅጣት ይቀጡ ቢሉ፤ አለቃ ኪዳነ ወልድ ጃንሆይ ይህማ መቼ ይኾናል ከነዚህ ይልቅ የባሰ ክህደት አርዮስ ተናግሮ ነበረ ተጋዘ ተሰደደ እንጂ የአካል ቅጣት ተፈረደበት? ከእነዚህም እንመለሳልን የሚሉት እየተገዙቱ ይመለሱ፤ አንመለስም ያሉት ቦታ ተወስኖባቸው በግዞት ይቀመጡ እንጂ የአካል ቅጣትስ አይገባቸውም ሲሉ አመለከቱ። ዐጄ ዮሐንስም ዋልድቤ እንግዳና ዙር አምቤ እንግዳ በድፍረት ወልደ ሥላሴ እንለዋለን ብለው ተናግረዋልና አልምራቸውም ብለው እጅ እግራቸውንና ምላሳቸውን አስቆረጧቸው። ዋልድቤ እንግዳ ወዲያው ሞተዋል፤ እነዙራንቤ እንግዳ ግን በዕድሜ ቈይተው ንስሐ ገብተው ሞተዋል። እነአለቃ ሥነ ጊዮርጊስ ፪ ልደት እንላለን እያሉ እየተገዙቱ ወደ ሀገራቸው ተምልሰዋል።<sup>97</sup>

When Emperor Yohannis said they have spoken a blasphemy against my creator in haste and they will be punished by amputation, Kidanä Wäld appealed to the Emperor saying, ‘Your Majesty, it should not be so. Even Arius who taught a greater heresy than these was exiled rather than being punished by amputation. Those who are willing to recant, let them repent and return. Those who refuse to recant let them be sent to exile. But they do not deserve to be punished by amputation.’ [But] Emperor Yohannis said that because Waldibe ሸገዳ and Zur Anbe<sup>98</sup> ሸገዳ had boldly spoken and had called [Jesus] the Son of the Trinity, I should not show them any mercy and gave the order for their limbs and tongue to be amputated. Waldibe ሸገዳ died instantaneously. But Zur Anbe repented and died at a ripe old age. Aläqa Sinä Giyorgis and friends returned to their hometown pleading to uphold *Hullät Lidät*.<sup>99</sup>

Aläqa Lämman, nevertheless, portrays a better picture of the Emperor as he maintains that it was Waldibe ሸገዳ himself who cut off his own tongue, not limbs, so that he would not recant his *Sost Lidät* faith.<sup>100</sup> His brother, however, did not cut out his tongue and recanted. Bahru Zewde perhaps most succinctly summarised the policies of Yohannis, religious as well as secular, when he said,

In many ways, his religious policy lacked the liberalism and spirit of tolerance that he had shown in the political field. Here again, 1878 was the crucial year. The Leche agreement in March, marking the apogee of the emperor’s power, was immediately followed by the

<sup>97</sup> Admasu, *Zikrä Liqawint*, 282.

<sup>98</sup> Zur Ambe’s name is also spelled as ‘Zur Anbe’.

<sup>99</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>100</sup> Lämman, *Tizzita*, 157.

*He was Anointed Because He was Incarnated*

Council of Boru Meda, which brought to an end the doctrinal controversies that had rent the Orthodox Church since the seventeenth century.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Bahru, *Modern Ethiopia*, 48.

## CONCLUSION

The author of *Mäzɡäbä Haymanot* raised a searching question pertaining to Ethiopian doctrinal development in the preface section of the treatise. Given the country's long history of Christianity, he asks, why is that the theology of the Ethiopian church has not developed as much as it should? In his own words,

የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ቤተ ክርስቲያን የተመሠረተችበት ዘመኑ ብዙ ሲሆን፤ እስካሁን ድረስ ደግሞ (የሃይማኖት ውሳኔ) የላትም ተብሎ ይነገራል። ይኸውም ሁናቴ በአንዳንድ በኩል መሠረተ-ቢስ ሊሆን ይችላል፤ ምክንያቱም እንደ መዝገበ ሃይማኖት፣ እንደ ፏቱ አዕማደ ሚስጥር ያሉ በየጊዜው የተደረሱና የተጻፉ ምዕላድ ስለ አሏት ነው። በአንዳንድ በኩል ደግሞ እርግጥ ነው ተብሎ አስተያየት የሚሰጥበት ምክንያት አለ። ምክንያቱም አንዳንድ ልዩነቶች ያላቸውን አስተያየቶች አንዳንድ ሊቃውንት ሲያቀርቡ፣ በጎን ወይም በአሽመር መናፍቅ፣ ከሀዲ እያሉ ይሰድቡታል እንጂ ሲኖዶስ ተሰብስቦ የወሰነው የኢትዮጵያ ቤተክርስቲያን የምትቀበለው እምነት ይኸ ነው እያለ ያጸደቀው ነገር ከቶ የለውም። አንዳንድ ሰዎች ስለሃይማኖት ውሳኔ መኖሩንና አለመኖሩን ሲጠይቋቸው የሚመልሱት ሃይማኖት አበውስ በማለት ነው። ሃይማኖት አበው የሃይማኖት ድንጋጌ አይደለም። የያንዳንዱ አባት አስተያየት በመልእክት መልክ የተጻፈና የተላከ የዚያም እስትጉብዕ ነው እንጂ። ይኸን ለይቶ ማወቅና እርሱን መሠረት አድርጎ ለሁሉም ውሳኔ መስጠት የቤተክርስቲያን አባቶች ተግባር ነው።<sup>1</sup>

Even though it has been many centuries since the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was established, it was often alleged that the Church never had a set of dogmas (bulls) to date. This saying, on the one hand, could be considered unfounded because the Church had manuscripts like the *Mäzɡäbä Haymanot* and *A'imädä Mist'rat* that were authored and written at different times. On the other hand the allegation is true because whenever some scholars came up with a different view, other than labelling them heretics behind their backs or making sarcastic comments [about them], at no time did the Synod meet to determine the faith the Ethiopian Church accepts. When some people are asked if there were encyclicals, they say 'How about *Haymanotä Abäw*?' *Haymanotä Abäw* is not a dogma. It was the compendium of the view of each Father written in a letter format. It is the responsibility of the Church Fathers to recognise this truth [about *Haymanotä Abäw*] and to come up with religious missives that have a universal application based upon it.<sup>2</sup>

This, in a nutshell, has been Ethiopian doctrinal history. Whether the 'Ethiopian' eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) was a reference to an ancient Ethiopian, a Sudanese or an African, one can argue that there have been Christians in Ethiopia right since the apostolic age. The 'coming' of Christianity in the sense of the mass conversion of the people and the establishment of the Church, nonetheless, inadvertently happened almost three centuries later when the Syrian Christian merchant Meropius, sailing to India, was brutally murdered along with his entire crew by the Ethiopians that also took captive his two young nephews, Frumentius and Adesius, who eventually converted the nation.

<sup>1</sup> Yä-Manbärä S'äbaṗot Qäddist Sillase Katedral (ed. and trans.) *Mäzɡäbä Haymanot* (Addis Ababa: Berhannena Selam Press, 1967), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Translation mine.

Whilst the possibility of Egyptian Christian businessmen coming to Ethiopia cannot be ruled out, the Alexandrian Church made very little contribution, if any, during this developmental stage of the Ethiopian Church. This, however, was soon to change and Alexandria, more than any other See, would have exercised a lasting influence on the Ethiopian Church. When the Syrian brothers were granted freedom to leave the country, should they wish, after many years building distinguished careers and unprecedented success, Aedesius wasted no time in returning to his native country. Frumentius, nevertheless, had unfinished business that needed to be addressed before his retirement: namely ensuring the survival and continuation of the newly planted Ethiopian Church under the guardianship of the well-established Markan See. To this end, Frumentius had to travel to Alexandria to implore St. Athanasius the Great to consecrate a bishop for Axum. Athanasius, nonetheless, consecrated Frumentius himself as Abba Sälama, the first bishop of Ethiopia. From then on, Ethiopians looked to Alexandria as well Egyptian bishops for the provision of orthodox teaching until the country began questioning the suitability and sustainability of having foreign prelates who did not fully understand the languages and cultures of the people. Ethiopia's request for autocephaly was eventually granted by the Coptic Pope Cyril VI (1959-1971) in 1959. In this regard, Frumentius, whom Ethiopians dubbed the 'Revealer of Light' (*Käsate Bīrhan*), in recognition of the light of the Gospel he brought to the Horn of Africa country, was also instrumental in introducing Alexandria to Axum.

The already established relationship between the Ethiopian and Alexandrian Churches obtained greater depth and breadth, from structural hierarchy to doctrinal unity, as a direct consequence of the arrival of the Nine Saints, who had fled their countries of origin due to persecution by the Chalcedonian authorities. Such was the measure of the respect they earned and the success they achieved that their missionary activity was dubbed Ethiopia's 'Second conversion'. The *monks* founded monasteries, which are still functional seventeen centuries on, were responsible for training the laity and undertook literacy projects whereby they translated into Ge'ez the entire Bible (*Sämanya Ahadu*), patristic works (such as *Dīrsanä Qerlos*<sup>3</sup>) and monastic rules (*Mäs'hafä Mänäkosat*) as

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<sup>3</sup> We have shown elsewhere in this thesis that while this work has been known as *Dīrsanä Qerlos* among the Ethiopian scholars, Weisser's parallel Ge'ez-German translation of *Dīrsanä Qerlos* has been entitled simply as *Qerellos*. Both *Qerellos* and *Qerlos* are spelt the same way in Amharic as 'ቁርሎስ.' We have used *Qerellos* whenever we refer directly to Weischer's work rather than *Dīrsanä Qerelos*.

### Conclusion

well as secular works like the *Physiologus* among others. Whilst all of the above mentioned works made outstanding contributions to the growth, stability and maturity of the Christian faith in Ethiopia, it was the *Īrsanä Qerlos*, the collection of primarily the works of Cyril of Alexandria (372-444) and a few other Church Fathers, that was the most influential work in shaping Ethiopian Christology, ensuring Ethiopia's unbreakable link with Alexandria and setting a line of defence against the advances of Western theology should it take the form of Catholic latinisation or protestant proselytisation. The *Īrsanä Qerlos*, accompanied by the traditional Amharic commentary on it (*Andimta*), has been part the core of the traditional theological curricula of the Ethiopian Church, which mainly employed the methods of mentoring and apprenticeship. Their presence was expedient in terms of strengthening the national Church through the promotion of Christian knowledge and encouraging personal piety and was indispensable in placing Ethio-Alexandrian relations on a stronger foundation. This situation remained unquestioned for the next ten or more centuries until the aftermath of the Islamic invasion of the Christian kingdom.

Unable to halt the advances of the ferocious Islamic forces led by Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (1507-1543), commonly known as Ahmäd Grañ, King Lībīnā Dīngīl (r. 1508-1540) was left with no option other than to seek help from the Christian Portugal. The Portuguese, who have linked the mythical figure of Prester of John with the Ethiopian emperor since the 16th century, had shown interest in Ethiopia and were spurred on by their own struggle against Islamic expansionism and the prospect of economic collaboration with the East African Christian kingdom. Led by Dom Cristovão da Gama, four hundred troops arrived in Ethiopia soon after the death of Lībīnā Dīngīl and saved the Christian kingdom from crumbling, killing Ahmäd Grañ in the process, despite being subjected to fierce attack by the forces of the Sheik and da Gama's capture and subsequent decapitation by his captors. The gallantry and sacrifices of these Christian fighters earned them the admiration and affection of the Ethiopians which translated into an improved Ethio-Roman relationship in the years that followed.

The Portuguese mission, however, was not simply aiming to protect the ancient Christian nation from falling prey to Islam. As important as it was, the intention was also to bring Orthodox Ethiopia under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. To this end, the troops were accompanied by Jesuit missionaries. Councils had been convened by successive emperors and Christology had been debated over and over with victory changing hands between the defenders of the Orthodox faith and the promoters

of Catholicism. The Jesuit presence began with the arrival of Andrés Oviedo in 1557, toward the end of Gälawdewos' (1540-1559) government, and their influence began steadily growing under Minas (1559-1563) and Yaqob (r. 1597-1603 and 1604-1607). But their golden time, arguably, was under the wise and capable leadership of Pedro Paez (1564-1622), a period that culminated in the conversion of Emperor Zä-Dīngīl (r. 1603-1604), whose public confession, disregarding Paez's advice to remain anonymous, led to a war that cost him his dear life. Undeterred by Zä-Dīngīl's fate, Emperor Susīniyos (r. 1606-1632) embraced Catholicism in 1621 following the conversion of his confidant and younger brother, Ras Sīlā Kīrstos. Unfortunately, Paez died soon after, in 1622, and was replaced by Patriarch Alfoso Mendez (1626-1636) who completely wrecked whatever his predecessor had achieved through his excessively radical reforms of re-baptising believers, the re-ordination of priests, the re-consecration of Churches, disinterring the tombs of the saints of the Orthodox Church, replacing Wednesday fasting by Saturday and substituting the Ethiopian calendar by the Gregorian, among other actions. His actions were taken as an insult to the Christian nation and bred deep resentment towards Roman Catholicism leading to the abdication of Susīniyos in favour of his son Fasil, the restoration of the Orthodox religion as the state religion, the expulsion of the Jesuits by the new emperor, and Ethiopia's isolation from the rest of the world. Mendez's frantic last minute attempts at national reconciliation were deemed too late too little. The damage was done. This thesis shows, however, that irrespective of their differing strategies, the arrival of the Jesuits was viewed by the Ethiopian theologians as a direct challenge to the Cyrillo-Alexandrian tradition that was engraved in Ethiopian ecclesiastical history and deeply embedded in the mentality of the people. Politically, the Jesuits were perceived as seeking to shift Ethiopia's allegiance from Alexandria to Rome and, theologically, their objective was understood by the Ethiopians as to replace Cyril's *Ahadu bahriy (mia physis)* formula with Chalcedon's *Kīl'etu bahriyat (duo physis)*.

Whilst the Ethiopian Church is one of the five Oriental Orthodox Churches who rejected the decisions of the Chalcedon and proudly describe their Christology as Cyrillian, St. Cyril, who died a few years before the Council of Chalcedon, never had problems with the Roman Popes past or present. This is amply evident in: Cyril's alliance with Pope Celestine in unseating Nestorius of Constantinople during his time; the adoption of Cyril's second letter alongside Pope Leo's Tome as the standards of orthodoxy at the Council of Chalcedon; Pope Leo XIII's veneration of Cyril

### Conclusion

posthumously as the Doctor of the Church (*Doctor ecclesiae*); and, centuries later, the encyclical of Pope Pius XII in 1944 honouring Cyril as a model for ecumenism and co-operation with Rome.

The Jesuit missionaries that came to Ethiopia failed to take advantage of Cyril's rapport with Rome and Ethiopia to build a bridge between them and the people they were seeking to reach out. The earliest Jesuits, who took part in the debates at the time of Gälawdewos, were, unfairly and wrongly, portrayed as holding incoherent theological positions contradictory to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Their stances ranged from unadulterated *hullät Lidät hullät bahriy* (two natures, two persons) to full-fledged Arianism, in which the very deity of Christ was boldly questioned and firmly rejected. We emphatically reject this polemical misrepresentation of opponents by the Ethiopian scholars (straw-man argument) as factually incorrect. The lesson from the first debate, however, is that in the view of Ethiopian theologians, there was no ambiguity in their minds that what was at stake was nothing less than Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy itself. Gälawdewos' verdict at the end of a debate in which the Ethiopians prevailed says it all:

At this time, King Gälawdewos said to Abba Zikry and Abba P'awli that you know that I am the servant of Christ and my religion, like your religion, is Alexandrian Orthodoxy. But since we lack medical knowledge and artistic skills which the Romans have, I beg you to let them stay in our country until they teach us their skills.

Pedro Paez, unlike his predecessors, was successful in winning over the Emperor Zä-Dingil through his skilful exegesis, theological acumen and personal integrity, but failed to convince the priests of the existence of two natures in Christ after the union. The Ethiopians accepted Paez's premises all the way, but to his dismay, rejected his conclusion which the Spaniard judged as illogical. The real problem, however, was that the Roman priest failed to appreciate the logicity of Cyril's understanding of one incarnate nature. In fairness to all parties involved, it had taken 1500 years for the Eastern and Western Churches to realise this. Similarly, later on, during the debates held at the time of the Emperor Susäniyos, his brother Ras Silä Kirstos was witnessed accusing the Orthodox priests of logical absurdity by holding two contradictory ideas at the same time, namely the existence of human and divine natures in Christ without confusion, separation or mixture (a Cyrillian concept before it was adopted by Chalcedon) and yet faith in one incarnate nature after the union. These incidents clearly show that in the view of the Ethiopians the underlying principle of Ethiopian theology as a quest for Cyrillian orthodoxy. But the clearest expression of the attitude of the

Ethiopian-bound Jesuits came from one of their number when answering the question of Bātrā Giyorgis, the speaker of the Orthodox priests, regarding St. Cyril's statement: 'He died whom death cannot touch in his nature or essence (*bä-Hillawiyähu*)'. 'I do not accept Cyril,' blurted out the missionary 'for he is like me.' Following this incident, all the missionaries were removed from the country.

The Orthodox victory and the once-and-for-all departure of the missionaries, nevertheless, did not solve the Christological problem. It rather gave impetus to the emergence of three Christological schools, referred to in Ethiopia as *bahil* (traditions), all of which are vigorously at war with each other, exclusively claiming, again, in their views, to be the true and only heirs of Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy, as well as being firm in their rejection of the Diophysites.

If the presence of the Jesuits was a challenge to Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy, the factions ushered in a new phase in Ethiopian doctrinal history whereby the nature of Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy was disputed. Their rise has been attributed to a lack of a unified response on the part of the Ethiopians to the challenges posed by the Jesuits, an attribute of Ethiopian doctrinal history which the writer of *Mäzgäbä Haymanot* perceptively alluded to when he said (as quoted at the top of this Conclusion), 'whenever some scholars came up with a different view, other than labelling them heretics behind their backs or making sarcastic comments [about them], at no time did the Synod meet to determine the faith the Ethiopian Church accepts'.<sup>4</sup> In the words of Bahru Zewde,

The controversy was ignited by Jesuit theology, more specifically the doctrine of the nature of Christ. It was the absence of a unanimous response to the Jesuits doctrinal challenge that gave birth to the diverse doctrines that have continued to baffle students of Ethiopian history.<sup>5</sup>

Each one of these traditions preferred to call themselves by the epithet *Tāwahdo*, but they came to be known mostly by the pejorative names of *Qibat* (pl. *Qibatočč*), *Yäs'ägga Lij* (pl. *Yäs'ägga Lijočč*) and *Karra Haymanot* or *Karra* (pl. *Karročč*). Another form of classification dubs them *Hullät Lüdät* (two births) and *Sost Lüdät* (three births). This thesis has equated the followers of *Karra Haymanot* with *Hullät Lüdät*, following prominent scholars of the Ethiopian Church such as Aläqa Lämna Haylu, Alämayyāhu Mogäs and Kidanä Wäld Kifle, because of their faith in the two 'births' of

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<sup>4</sup> Please see above.

<sup>5</sup> Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 14.



### Conclusion

Christ, eternally from God the Father without a mother (*Wäldä 'ab*) and temporally from the Holy Virgin without a human father (*Wäldä Mariyam*).<sup>6</sup> *Sost Lidät*, which sometimes is taken for granted as a reference to *S'ägga Lijočč*, is strictly speaking equally applicable to *Qibat* followers as both groups, in addition to accepting the 'two births' of *Hullät Lidät*, equate the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb at the point of the union as the 'third birth' albeit for different reasons. All care, however, was taken to ensure that the 'third birth' is understood metaphorically, unlike the first two 'literal' births, lest it would lead to confessing Jesus as the Son of the Holy Spirit (*Wäldä Mänfäs Qidus*), confusing the hypostases of the Father (as the begetter or *Wäladi*) with that of the Holy Spirit (who is the One who proceeds or *Säras'i*). Ever since the Council of Borumeda of 1878, the highly desired title of *Täwahdo* became the sole property of *Karra Haymanot* after it was proclaimed the state religion by Emperor Yohannis IV (1872-1889).

This thesis has attempted to clarify the distinctive features of each of these positions. *Qibat*, which means 'unction', despite undergoing some changes through time, maintained its basic tenets that the Son of God became a human being through the hypostatic union and that the humanity which the Son of God assumed was elevated to be the humanity of God through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The adherents of *Qibat* employed the formula *bäqibat yäbahiry lij honä* (Christ became the ontological Son of God by unction) in order to convey this truth but this resulted in their teaching being mistaken for Eutychianism whereby the humanity of Christ was absorbed by the divinity so that Christ had only one divine nature after the incarnation. The founding generation of *Qibat*, at the time of Emperor Fasil (1632-1667) represented by *İwur Zä-Iyyäsus*, believed that the Son of God lost his divine glory (not his divine nature) when he hypostatically united himself with imperfect humanity. His glory was restored and his humanity perfected through the anointing work of the Holy Spirit. The problematic Cyrillian phrase *bä-zätäsäbi-ä täqäbi-ä* ('He was anointed because he was incarnated') was thus understood to mean Jesus's anointing was the means by which the divine glory was restored to him which he voluntarily set aside when he underwent the hypostatic union. Subsequent generations of *Qibat* scholars, however, slightly modified this position abandoning the notion of the Son of God losing his divine glory. Akalä KIRSTOS and friends, who led the second generation of *Qibat* theologians, at the time of Emperor Yohannis I (r. 1667-1682), rather than linking the anointing of the Spirit with the

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<sup>6</sup> Contra, Crummey, Ayele and Cardinal Massaja

restoration of the lost divine glory, maintained that whilst God became man through the hypostatic union, the assumed humanity was glorified to be (the humanity of) God by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. This move of limiting the efficacy of the anointing work of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' humanity alone was in accordance with Cyrillian thought which said 'his divinity cannot be anointed' (*wä-mäläkotus iyitqäbbi'i*). Finally, Arat Ayna Goshu and company, who rose to prominence at the time of Emperor Tewodros II (r. 1855-1868), moved *Qibat* closer to *Karra* when they granted that the anointing of the Holy Spirit worked together with, rather than in isolation from, the hypostatic union in order for God to become human and the humanity he took from Mary to be glorified and perfected to divinity. In our view, this was an opportune moment to resolve the difference between *Qibat* and *Karra* had it not been for the partisanship of the monarchy as well as the clergy.

The adherents of *Yäs'ägga Lij* claim that they stand in uninterrupted continuity with Frumentius and blame the followers of *Karra Haymanot* and *Qibat* for giving them a label that would confuse their theology with a teaching they detest and strongly dissociate themselves from, namely adoptionist Christology, this is, that the human Christ became the Son of God after receiving God's grace of sonship at some point during his earthly life, in most cases, understood to be at his baptism. Where they were not branded as adoptionists, they were portrayed as Chalcedonians. A careful examination of their theology, from materials written by or about them, however, shows that they were Cyrillians. The charges of adoptionism cannot be substantiated as the group clearly confesses that 'The Word and the flesh through the [hypostatic] union [became] the incarnate Son: one person, one Son, perfect God and perfect man'. St. Cyril would have agreed with this without any reservation. The charge of diaphosytism, wrongfully in our view, was based on a Chalcedonian re-reading of their assertion that Christ has 'Two natures, two acts and two ontological births through preservation (*bätä'aqbo*)'. The use of 'two natures' language, nevertheless, does not automatically define one as a Chalcedonian. Cyril himself, who condemned attributing the acts of Christ to either of the natures in the fourth anathema of his Twelve Chapters (*Qalä Gëzzät Zä-Qerellos*), was criticised for subscribing to the 'two natures' language of the Formulary of Reunion of AD 433. Ethiopians are fully aware of Cyril's response – from his letters to Succensus (Ge'ez = *Soksis*) (*Ep.* 45),<sup>7</sup> Acacius of Melitene (Ge'ez =

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<sup>7</sup> Wickham, *Cyril*, 70-83.

### Conclusion

*Afasis*) (*Ep.* 41)<sup>8</sup> and Eulogius<sup>9</sup> (Ge'ez = *Awlogiyos*) (*Ep.* 44) – that the content of their theology is more important than their semantics.

The doctrinal statement which the Easterns have produced is under attack in certain quarters and it is being asked why the bishop of Alexandria tolerated, even applauded it, seeing that they use the words 'two natures'. ... To these critics it must be said that there is no obligation to shun and reject everything heretics say – they affirm many of the points we too affirm. When, for example, Arians declare the Father to be creator of the universe and lord, must we, on that account, shun these affirmations? The same holds good of Nestorius if he says 'two natures' to indicate the difference between the flesh and God the Word – the point being that the nature of the Word is other than that of the flesh. However, he fails to affirm the union along with us.<sup>10</sup>

Like their adversaries *Qibat*, the followers of *Yäs'ägga Lij* believe in the third birth (*Sost Lüdät*) of Jesus from the Holy Spirit in addition to the two births (*Hullät Lüdät*) that *Karra Haymanot* staunchly advocated. But their point of departure from *Qibat* is on the rationale for it. For the various strands of *Qibat* Jesus had to be anointed for his own sake, either in order to regain the glory the Son of God, which was lost when uniting himself with the flesh (*İwur Zä-Iyyäsus*), or to glorify his humanity to the status of divinity (*Akalä Kirstos* and *Arat Ayna Goshu*). For *Yäs'ägga Lijočč*, Jesus received the Spirit on our behalf as the Second Adam in order to restore for the human race the grace of sonship Adam and his descendants had lost because of the Fall. One again, the portrayal of Christ as the Second Adam is one of the major themes of Cyrillian theology which *Yäs'ägga Lij* theologians underlined.

For *Karra Haymanot*, derogatorily named 'knife', presumably for 'cutting out' the third birth which their opponents accept, their preferred name is either *Täwahdo* or *Hullät Lüdät*, a reference to perfect God (born from God the Father without a mother in eternity past) and to his perfect humanity (born from the Virgin Mary temporally). Like *Qibat*, we know, *Karra* went through stages of development before it took its current form as the official Christological position of the Ethiopian Church. The five variants or strands of *Karra* can be broadly classified into two major subgroups: four of them as *Mänfäs Qidus Qib'i* (those who call the Spirit unction) and the remaining one as *Wäld Qib'i* (a group who calls the Son unction). All four belonging to the *Mänfäs Qidus Qib'i* group are now obsolete. Even though they all confessed *Mänfäs Qidus Qib*, they differed in their explanation of what the anointing of the Holy Spirit accomplished in the life of

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<sup>8</sup> Wickham, *Cyril*, 34-61.

<sup>9</sup> Wickham, *Cyril*, 62-68.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Wickham, *Cyril*, 63.

Jesus. The first group maintained that the anointment of the Spirit was the power of God that miraculously created the body of Jesus in the womb of Mary. The role of the Spirit is that of a maker (*gäbari*). The second group depicted the Spirit as cleanser (*Mäns'ih*) for he purified Christ from being tainted by the effects of the Fall. For the third *Mänfäs Qïdus Qib* group, the Holy Spirit was seen as the agent of union of the humanity and divinity (*dämari*) just like oil was used to blend myrrh, cinnamon, cane and cassia together to make the oil of anointment in the Old Testament (Exodus 30:23-27). These three *Mänfäs Qïdus Qib* groups were maximalists in the sense that they all affirmed Jesus needed to receive the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb for his own sake, whether for reasons of creation, cleansing or composition. The fourth group, which can be regarded as minimalist, held the view that Jesus had no need for the anointing of the Holy Spirit (*zä-ïyräbîh*) but had to do it for our sake as our exemplar. This brings us to the fifth and last strand of *Karra Haymanot*, which has outlasted the other strands, *Wäld Qib*. According to this group, Jesus being God and the second person of the Trinity, by definition, does not depend for his existence or acts on anyone other than himself. Dependency undermines divinity. It follows from this that, when it comes to Jesus, 'anointment' and 'union' refer to the same divine act of the eternal Word, hypostatically uniting himself with the humanity he took from Mary glorifying it to divine status in the process without the intervention of others. The founding fathers of this view, according to Azzaž Täklä Sillase T'inno, the chronicler of Emperor Susäniyos, were Azzaž Zä-Dingil and Abba Kiflä Kïrstos. In the ensuing debate, in front of the monarch at Ač'afär in 1612, the *Qibatočč*, who held that the Father is the anointer, the Son is the anointed one and the Holy Spirit is the unction, prevailed against their *Wäld Qib Karra* opponents who argued that the hypostatic union was in lieu of the anointment even when the Ač'afär creed was distinctly non-Cyrrillian as it contravened the fourth (dividing the deeds of Jesus between his divinity and humanity), the seventh (attributing the glory of Jesus to the eternal Word alone) and the tenth (failing to confess the flesh of Jesus was the very flesh of the Word) anathemas by making a clear-cut distinction between the humanity and divinity of Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Wickham, *Cyrril*, 13-33. Cyril's twelve anathemas, referred by the Ethiopian theologians as 'ቃለ ግዛት ዘቁርኤስ', have been known in Ethiopia for thousands of years. For the copy of ቃለ ግዛት ዘቁርኤስ, cf. *Haymanotä Abäw*, section 121, pp.562-565.

### Conclusion

In the end, far from being heretical, it is our conviction that all three theological cultures (*Bahil*) meet the Cyrillian criteria of Alexandrian orthodoxy that was simply and helpfully summed up by Weinandy:

1. It is truly *God the Son* who is man. Here the emphasis is focussed upon the full divinity of the Son.
2. It is *truly man* that Son of God is. Here the emphasis is focussed upon the full and complete humanity.
3. The Son of God *truly is* man. Here the emphasis is focussed upon the ontological union between the person of the Son and his humanity – that is Jesus must be one being or reality that Jesus *is* the Son of God *existing as a man*.<sup>12</sup>

The Ethiopian quest for Cyrillo-Alexandrian Orthodoxy obtained its fullest expression at Borumeda in 1878 when Emperor Yohannis IV and King Minilik of Shoa (later Emperor Minilik II of Ethiopia) convened and personally presided over the Council. The objective of the Council was to determine the true representation of the Alexandrian faith from among the rival schools, as was clearly stated by the Royal decree: ‘If any person rejects one Father Saint Mark; one Mother the religion of Alexandria; he shall be excluded from Christians.’ The Council was open by Yohannis’ rhetorical question which the adherents of *S’ägga Lij* replied to in words that echoed back the imperial proclamation: ‘From Above Christ is our Father; from Below Mark is our Father and Alexandria is our Mother.’ The fatherhood of Mark and the motherhood of Alexandria was a figurative expression of Alexandrian orthodoxy. Moreover, Emperor Yohannis had at his disposal a letter from the Archbishop of Alexandria himself apparently clarifying the essences of Cyrillo-Alexandrian Christology. The emperor was a die-hard *Karra* and Minilik was a moderate *Hullät Lüdät* who would not have a problem with the *Sost Lüdät* followers which his late father fanatically supported. Right from the beginning, *Sost Lüdätočč* were challenged to show their true colours by endorsing the papal letter which sanctioned *Wäld Qib* Christology and equated *Sost Lüdät* with the historical heresies of Arianism and Nestorianism without any justification based on biblical or patristic literature including that of his distant predecessor St Cyril, highly regarded by the West and the East alike mainly for his benchmark contributions to Christology. The authority of the incumbent of the Markan throne over Ethiopia and the authenticity of the letter were not disputed. *Sost Lüdätočč*, however, questioned the source of the Alexandrian pope’s information (referring to the historical precedent of Tigrean *Karročč* taking advantage of their geographical proximity to brainwash a newly

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas G. Weinandy, *Jesus the Christ* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publication Division, Our Sunday Visitor Inc, 2003), p. 54. Italics are his.

appointed bishop) and, we question his motivation as political rather than theological. Owing to the pre-Council persecution of *Yäs 'ägga Lijjočč* (two of their speakers were released upon request after the Council began only to have their limbs amputated by order of the emperor at the end of the Council), the intimidating imperial presence throwing its full support behind *Karra Haymanot*, and the equally lamentable incompetence of the representatives of *Sost Lidät*, their fate was sealed.

Alexandria may not understand the intricacies of Ethiopian Christology and its various strands that evolved with time. That was not how the Ethiopians felt. In the view of the Ethiopians, for centuries, they have sought Cyrillo-Alexandrian orthodoxy and now they have achieved it at Borumeda. Their victory is Alexandria's victory, which they proudly and joyfully dedicate it to her.

በዚህ ጊዜ ኢትዮጵያ ያንድ የቅዱስ ማርቆስ ዕጣ ናትና፤ መላውም ሁለት ልደት በተዋሕዶ ከበረ ይበል እንጂ ሦስት ልደት የጸጋ ልጅ የሚል ይሰደድ፤ ሲያስተምርም ቢገኝ ይቀጣ ብለው አዋጅ ነገሩ። በዚህም ጊዜ ለአጼ ዮሐንስና ለአጼ ምኒልክ በኢትዮጵያ የአብርሃንና የአጽብሐን ፍቅር አንድነት ሰጥቶ በነዚህ መንግሥት የሃይማኖት እስክንድርያ ጉባኤ አድርገው፤ መናፍቃን ተረተው እስክንድርያ እልል ብላ፤ ልጆችዋም ደስ ብሏቸዋልና ይህን ያደረገ እግዚአብሔር ይክበር ይመስገን ለዘለዓለም አሜን።<sup>13</sup>

At this time, [Yohannis] proclaimed Ethiopia is the share of St Mark and everyone should confess 'Two Births' (*Hullät Lidät*) and that [Christ's humanity] was glorified by the hypostatic union. Any one holding 'Three Births' (*Sost Lidät*) teaching or 'Son by grace' (*Yäs 'ägga Lij*) will be punished and those found propagating likewise would be exiled. Praise be to God forever and ever for giving Majesties Yohannis and Minilik the love and harmony of Abraha and As'biha; for enabling them to convene a council during their time and for granting victory over the heretics. Alexandria has rejoiced and her children are delighted.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Gäbrä Sillase, *Minilik*, 92.

<sup>14</sup> Translation mine.

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